

19-4

LIBRARY
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

BR 145 .A37 1823 v.1
Allen, Benjamin, 1789-1829
History of the church of
Christ

Green Library of
Princeton Seminary
N.J.

Mr. Jacobus
~~Princeton Seminary~~

Dec 4th 1860

to the Court
of the Lord
of the Court
of the Lord

of the Court
of the Lord

of the Court
of the Lord



HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. BENJAMIN ALLEN,
RECTOR OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY E. BACON, No. 92, NORTH FIFTH STREET.
Clark & Raser, Printers, 33 Carter's Alley.
1823.

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twenty-third day of August, in the forty-eighth year of the independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1823, the Rev. Benjamin Allen, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:

"History of the Church of Christ. By the Rev. Benjamin Allen, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Philadelphia. Vol. I."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned"—And also to the act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled, 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

TO THE YOUNG,

WITH EARNEST PRAYER THAT THEY MAY BE LED TO SEEK FIRST

THAT KINGDOM,

TO THE POSSESSION OF WHICH IS ANNEXED THE PROMISE OF
ALL THINGS,

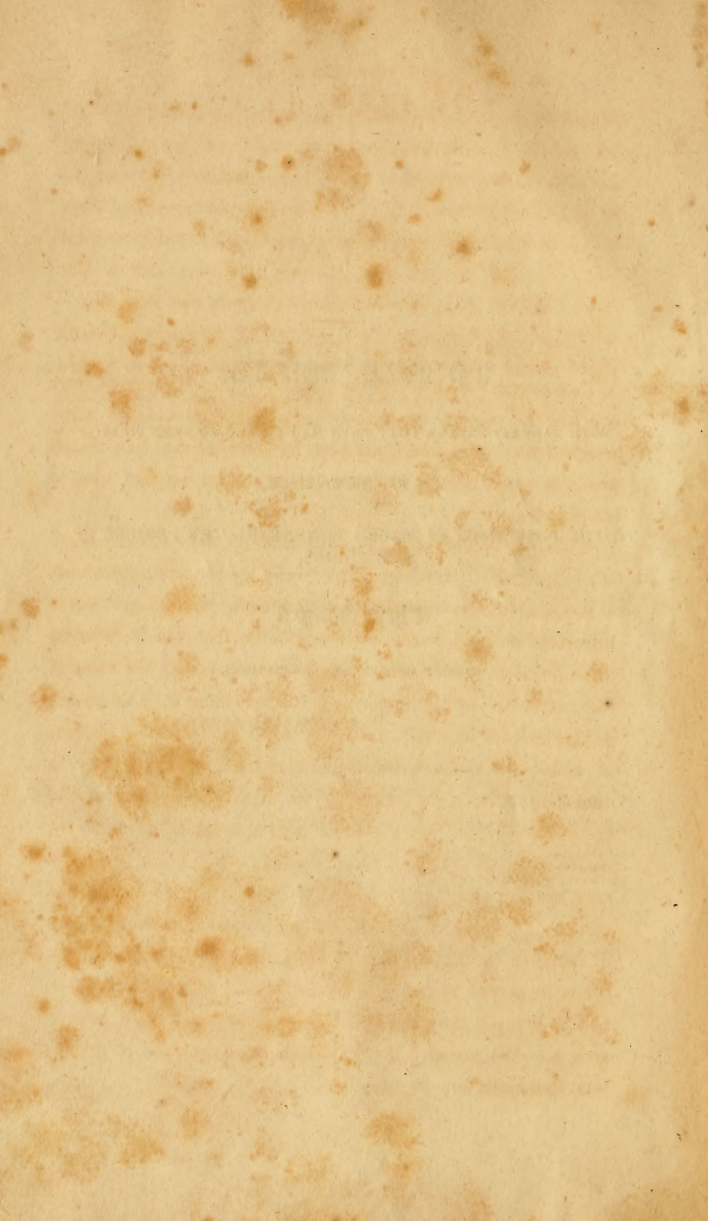
These Pages

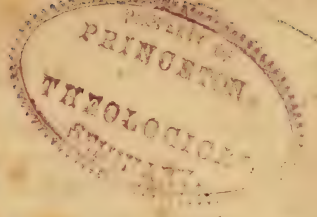
ARE MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FRIEND,

B. ALLEN.

Philadelphia, 1823.





PREFACE.

THE urgency with which the Author of these pages has been solicited to venture upon their preparation, would not have weighed with him, had it not been for the hope that they might prove in some degree instrumental in advancing the cause of the Redeemer.

A plain narration of the prominent events that have occurred in the progress of the church of Christ, is certainly calculated to benefit. Every member of a community called Christian is interested in those events, and every mind that can be brought to contemplate them must receive an impression of the value of the gospel and of the importance of cherishing it. As we behold principles in action, and, as it were, living in the conduct of multitudes through successive centuries, we learn how to appreciate those principles. As we mark the constant rise of the Sun of righteousness, and the melting away of the transient clouds which from time to time sought to obscure it, we feel how sure are the promises of God, and how futile the attempts of error. The song of triumph flowing from the lips of an army of martyrs encourages us in our pilgrimage. The moral loveliness displayed in the lives of the faithful calls upon us to be holy. We see the power of Divine grace, and learn how to seek it. We perceive the preciousness of the word of revelation, and learn how to prize it.

Such a narration may prove especially useful in these days of spiritual enterprise, when the arm of the Lord is made bare for the destruction of heathenism, and the light of truth is diffusing itself with unparalleled triumph. The soldiers of the King of kings now in the field, may certainly gain knowledge from the story of those who have gone before them in the war.

And will not every father of a family wish his children to know something of the history of the Church, as well as of the history of Rome or of England? Glorious indeed are the efforts making for the instruction of the young: May this work be numbered among them!



HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Century First.

CHAPTER I.

Character and Work of our Lord.—State of the World.—The Gospel.

OUR Lord Christ existed from eternity.—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.—Father, glorify thou me—with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

Our Lord Christ is one with the Father. For declaring this the Jews took up stones to stone him.

Our Lord Christ is very and eternal God. As such he was foretold by the prophets. As such he was announced by his forerunner. As such he was honoured during the whole of his incarnation. As such he was published by the Spirit through signs and wonders, and revelations of doctrine. As such he was worshipped by his apostles, and by the ransomed church and the angels in heaven.

He created all things, for “without him was not any thing made that was made.” He upholdeth “all things by the word of his power.” He shall judge all things,

for "the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son."

He came forth to redeem. In the counsels of eternity he entered into the covenant written "in the volume of the book;" a covenant to be "wounded for our transgressions," and to give himself "a ransom" for our souls. From the beginning his "delights were with the sons of men." On the fall of Adam, he proclaimed himself as the Deliverer. Under the character of "the seed of the woman," he appeared to the eye of faith. By the type of sacrifice, he set forth to the view of all the death he designed to endure. By all the revelations of the patriarchal dispensation, he instructed mankind concerning his advent. By the more explicit ceremonial vouchsafed to the Jews, he made his character and the object of his coming abundantly clear. In the midst of that chosen people he raised up prophets, who described his very sufferings with graphic distinctness. At length he came, "born of a woman, born under the law." He came, the only begotten Son, to reconcile us to the Father we had offended.

The state of the world at the time of his coming was peculiar. Notwithstanding the remains of the patriarchal dispensation, and the reflected rays of the Jewish, the nations of the earth were given up to superstition. Seeking to be wise they had become fools, and "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and beasts, and creeping things." Great discoveries had been made in science and the arts. Philosophers were numerous, and their schools well attended. Moralists who professed to teach virtue were not wanting. But there were no sufficient sanctions of principle or of law. The knowledge

of futurity was indistinct, and the true notion of God forgotten. Selfishness was made the ground of action, sensuality the essence of religion, and the conduct of the phantoms men worshipped was represented as such as by the public opinion of every Christian land is now declared infamous.

The chosen people had perverted their extraordinary light. Instead of waiting in the humility of gratitude for the coming of the Messiah, so long announced, they gave way to the conceits of a fleshly mind; and, regarding themselves as the holy favourites of Heaven, beheld all others with contempt. They looked for the Deliverer promised to their fathers, as one who should break the Roman yoke, under which they groaned, and exalt them to sovereignty over the kingdoms of the earth. As the time when "the Desire of all nations" was expected drew nigh, their ambitious hopes increased.

So entire was the prevalence of the "carnal mind" among them, they had degenerated into hypocrisy. They had so multiplied traditions as to make void the law. In short, they had so lost sight of spiritual worship, that the chief ones among them deserved and received the rebuke—"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell."

"Immanuel—God with us," came to the view of mortals, "an infant of days." By the power of the Holy Ghost, a child was born of a pure virgin, and the government was upon his shoulder, and his name was called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Father of the everlasting age, the Prince of peace."

He came "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." In the very lowliness of humiliation he sojourned. Having taken "upon him the seed of Abraham," he

who might have taken upon him the nature of angels—who might have remained in the inaccessible light of the Godhead without any condescension—having been “made flesh,” he “dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

He healed our diseases. Like a fountain of compassion, he poured forth the tide of his benefits upon all around. The deaf heard; the lame walked; the blind saw; the palsied moved again in active joy: life, light and loveliness shone wherever he trod.

He preached his gospel—glad tidings—immortality; pardon to the penitent; cleansing to the depraved; comfort to the mourner; hope to the dying; triumphant anticipation to all who would believe. “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” was his continual language—“Ho every one that thirsteth.”

How bright was the example of God manifest in the flesh. He honoured the law in its spirit as well as letter. Not a jot, not a tittle was forgotten. He moved along the path of holiness in infinite perfection.

After opening the proclamation of his gospel, our blessed Lord sent forth twelve disciples to “preach, saying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” To these, in the plenitude of his divinity, he gave power to work miracles. Their commission extended “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Among them they were to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils;” but into the way of the Gentiles, or into any city of the Samaritans, they were, as yet, not to go.

Continuing to pass about from village to village, from city to city, distributing blessings to all who would re-

ceive, he scattered far and wide the knowledge of the truth. From the extreme of Galilee to Jerusalem, and south, he circulated his glad tidings. The people that walked in darkness saw a great light: upon them that dwelt in the shadow of death the light shined. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He did not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness did he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. The oppressed found in him a refuge, and while the proud ones trembled, the multitudes heard him gladly.

Beside the twelve apostles, the Lord "appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two into every city and place" whither he himself would come. Those first sent equalled the number of the tribes, and these the number of the elders of Israel.

As the hour of his agony drew nigh, he unfolded to his disciples the nature of his kingdom more and more distinctly; gave them to understand that he was to suffer; declared the persecutions they were to endure; favoured them with eminent counsels; fortified them with precious promises, especially that infinite one of the coming of the Comforter. He uttered his parables and his warnings more frequently to the Jews; he poured forth the lamentations of his compassionate heart over guilty Jerusalem, and thus prepared both friends and foes for the great consummation.

At length the fulness of time being come, he entered the wine-press of the wrath of God. Alone, unaided, he approached the altar of justice, bared his bosom to its lightnings, and gave himself to be consumed. His holy

soul was surrounded by the horrors that belonged to the guilty. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow," was heard in Heaven, and the vials of the Father's vengeance were poured upon the head of our surety. "He was wounded—he was wounded for our transgressions: he was bruised for our iniquities. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

There was manifest to the view of mortals the bloody sweat of the garden, the apostacy of one of the twelve, the denial of another—the flight of all: there was manifest the blasphemy of the Jews, the mockery of Herod, the insults of the Roman soldiery: there was heard the "crucify him! crucify him!" As the Lamb went forth to the slaughter, there was seen the rabble, that from every alley of Jerusalem precipitated itself around Calvary. The cross, the taunting scoff of the malefactor, the darkness over the whole land, the opening graves, the rending rocks, the lamentable cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—all these were palpable, and these were heralds of what passed between the Father and the Son—the offering and receiving the sacrifice—"the just for the unjust,"—"Christ through the Eternal Spirit," giving "himself without spot," a ransom for our souls. Alleluia! was heard in heaven,—Alleluia! for "thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation."

Having, "through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Jesus rose, "leading captivity captive." He remained in his humanity forty days upon earth, conversing with his disciples concerning the things of the kingdom; he issued

the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" he vouchsafed the promise, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world:" then he ascended—our world echoing back the song that accompanied his advent, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men."

A. D. 33.—CHAPTER II.

The Apostles.—Pentecost.—Peter and John.—Persecution.—Barnabas.—Triumphs of the Cross.

FROM Mount Olivet the apostles returned, in obedience to the command of our Lord, to Jerusalem. There they continued, along with the disciples, in prayer and supplication. In the room of the traitor Judas, two, probably from among the seventy, were selected, and he on whom the lot fell was numbered with the eleven.

On the day of Pentecost, the ascended Head of the church sent forth the promise from the Father: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," and began to speak with tongues. Immediately a multitude surrounded them, amazed and marvelling. Peter, standing up with the eleven, charged home upon the throng the murder of our Lord. With the undaunted courage of a Christian hero—an utter contrast to the feebleness he had so lately manifested—he preached Jesus of Nazareth. He exhibited him to the view of the astonished auditors, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high. With the

authority of an apostle, he demanded their repentance and faith. And they were pricked to the heart, and cried out to the twelve, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The sword of the Lord, "piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit"—the Holy Ghost making effectual the word—their sins were set in array before them, and they convinced of the enormity of their guilt. In obedience to the command of Peter, the native forwardness of whose spirit was now properly directed, "they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day there were added—about three thousand souls."

Here was the commencement of the operations of the Holy Ghost, in gathering that church which is to continue to the end of time, and triumph throughout eternity—The apostles and the seventy, and three thousand believers, added to those who before were faithful. We now behold it commencing its progress, having in possession the promise, "LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS."

May we contemplate it with benefit, be numbered among its holy ones, and partake of its future glory!

Shortly after the effusion of the Holy Spirit, Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour when the Jews were offering their evening sacrifice. A lame man, who sat at the Beautiful Gate, asked an alms. "Silver and gold have I none," said one of the apostles, "but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." As the people saw him entering with them into the temple, "walking and leaping, and praising God, they ran together unto" the apostles, "greatly wondering." Peter, improving the opportunity, preached again unto them Jesus, and said, It is not by our own power or holiness we have made this man to

walk:—"Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.—Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

The Spirit of the Lord again set home the word, and it brought forth fruit: many of them which heard believed. But Satan, unwilling to surrender his kingdom, stirred up a sect of infidels who denied the resurrection. The Sadducees, under the captain of the temple, came upon them, being "grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead—and they laid hands on them," and cast them into prison.

The day after, the enemies of the cross assembled, and summoned the apostles to their presence. Intrepid in the strength of their Lord they stood before the crucifiers, and charged upon them their guilt. "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Unacquainted with the influences of the Spirit, the chief priests marvelled: How came these unlettered men so powerful? Perceiving they could do nothing, as the miracle was such that all Jerusalem saw it, they dismissed Peter and John, charging them to preach and to teach no more in the name of Jesus. "Whether it be right in the sight of God," replied the undaunted disciples, "to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Returned to their own company, the persecuted united with them in a song of praise for the privilege of suffering. They and all the believers cast their every care upon Him at "the right hand of God exalted," and, in fervent prayer, commended his own cause to his own guidance.

The place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection, and great grace was upon them all." So entire was the unity of spirit and of doctrine, that the rich sold their possessions for distribution to the poor, and all things were held in common.

Among those who came forward with the offerings of their property was a Levite, named Joses, of the isle of Cyprus, surnamed by the apostles Barnabas, the son of consolation. He was afterward numbered with the apostles.

So great was the power of the Holy Ghost testifying of the resurrection, that multitudes both of men and women were added to the Lord, and sick folks and them which were vexed with unclean spirits were brought even from the cities round about Jerusalem, and were healed every one.

Then the high priest and his coadjutors, the Sadducees, who denied the doctrine of resurrection, "were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

The high priest and his counsellors, the senate of the children of Israel, gathered together in the morning, and

sent for their prisoners; but lo! they were standing in the temple and proclaiming the resurrection.

“We ought,” said Peter and the other apostles, when summoned to appear, “to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.” But they listened to the advice of Gamaliel, and, after beating the apostles, let them go.

The happy sufferers departed rejoicing, and “daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.”

A. D. 33.—CHAPTER III.

Deacons.—Stephen.—Saul.—Philip.—The Eunuch.

THE multitude and national variety of believers making it expedient, a new order of ecclesiastical officers was created. Seven individuals were chosen, and upon them the apostles laid hands, ordaining them deacons.

Of these “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Such was the “wisdom and the spirit by which he spake,” that certain of the synagogues of strangers resident at Jerusalem, suborned men who bore false witness against him. Having brought him to the council, they accused him of pub-

lishing the doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth. "And all that sat in the council—saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Being called upon to speak for himself, the protomartyr began at the revelation to Abraham, and, following the chain of events, made to pass in review before them the dealings of God with their fathers. In answer to the charge of blasphemy, he expressed his veneration for the word and appointments of the Most High. He called to their attention the prophecy of Moses concerning the Messiah; and, in the end, rebuked, in strong terms, their stiffnecked and uncircumcised character. The venom of their unrenewed hearts rose to its utmost fury: "They gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly unto Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him.—They stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

The enmity of the carnal heart now raged. "There was a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Saul of Cilicia, a Pharisee of strong natural endowments and superior cultivation, was the prime leader in the work of Satan. The enlargement of his mind and increase of his learning did not so sanctify his heart, as

to fill him with liberal emotions. He surrendered himself to all the rancour of the unconverted man, whose pride is assailed and whose prejudices are aroused. He "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison." The providence of God, however, overruled this to the wider extension of the gospel. "They that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word."

Among the rest, Philip, another of the deacons, "went down to the city of Samaria, and in that capital of the mingled descendants of Gentiles and Israelites, preached Christ. This was a breaking forth of the light toward the heathen. The faithful missionary so published the doctrine of his Master, that it was carried to many hearts, and the Holy Ghost accompanied his word with miracles—healing the sick, and casting out unclean spirits. Among those who were baptized was a sorcerer, who had long "bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one." "He continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

When the apostles who remained with the persecuted flock at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent unto them two of their number, Peter and John. They prayed for the baptized, and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Simon, who never had received that baptism of the heart symbolized by the baptism of water, when he saw that the miraculous as well as ordinary power of the Holy Ghost was communicated by the laying on of the apostles' hands, offered them money. "Thy money perish with thee," answered Peter, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with mo-

ney. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

In their return to Jerusalem, the apostles "preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."

A Jewish proselyte, treasurer to Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had been up to Jerusalem to worship, was returning along the way toward Gaza: Philip was directed to go and join him. He found him reading that striking portion of the prophet Esaias, which, like antedated history, describes the sufferings of the Redeemer. The proselyte, having a willing mind, Philip preached to him Jesus: nor did he preach in vain. The attentive listener received into a good and honest heart the truth, and was baptized.

A. D. 35.—CHAPTER IV.

Conversion of Saul.—Labours of Paul; of Peter.—The Centurion. Antioch.

HITHERTO the rising church had been allowed to endure the fierce persecutions that were brought about by Saul: but the time now arrived, in which the lion was to be made to dwell with the lamb. The tide of the persecutor's energy, while assaulting the church, was like a torrent from the mountains of Africa, discovering and cleansing the gold: but it pleased Divine Providence to make that tide a deep and broad river, whose fertilizing wave should distribute wealth to multitudes.

The Pharisee, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters

to Damascus," the ancient capital of Syria, that he might there wreak his fury upon the Christians. He who holds bound the ministers of his discipline, and says to them when he pleases, "Thus far, and no farther," arrested him in his career: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Blessed Lord, we thank thee that thou dost regard what is done to thy disciples as done to thyself! Trembling and astonished, the persecutor inquired, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Receiving his commands, he went into the city, not as a triumphant minister of vengeance, but as a captive malefactor. After he had remained three days fasting, a disciple was sent to him, and he received through his means sight and instruction. The ordinary operations of the Spirit having renewed his heart, as well as the miraculous power of God, astonished and overwhelmed him, he professed his faith in Jesus, and was baptized.

He now went into the synagogues, not to deliver his letters from the high priest, not to "blaspheme that holy name by which we are called," but to preach Christ and him crucified. The Jews were confounded. The learning of a man brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, brought to show them that all their ceremonies and all their prophets proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah! They perceived their cause was prostrate.

Saul, now Paul the apostle, created an apostle by the Lord himself, after preaching a short time, went and published the gospel in Arabia; thus acting in his appropriate character as an apostle of the Gentiles. Returning to Damascus, the Jews sought to kill him, and with them joined the governor of the city; but he escaped to Jerusalem. There he met with Barnabas, who took him

to two of the earlier apostles, Peter and James, and they received as a brother, the man who a few years before had gone forth to devour the flock. The disciples rejoiced greatly at the change, though, at first, not being fully convinced of its reality, they hesitated. But the enemies of the cross were exasperated, and they sought to slay him; in consequence of which he went to Cæsarea, and thence to his native city Tarsus.

The conversion of Saul the Pharisee, into Paul the apostle, appears to have greatly disconcerted the Jews; for "the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria." Moreover the Spirit from on high was poured out abundantly, "for they were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

Peter, as did probably all the other apostles, as well as the elders and deacons, passed from place to place, preaching the gospel. The miracle performed by him at Lydda, near the Mediterranean, was blessed to the conversion of multitudes; for the dwellers at Lydda and in the plain of Saron, are supposed to have been very numerous. At Joppa also, the Holy Ghost was with him. While tarrying at the latter place, he received a message from Cornelius, a centurion, who had been directed by an angel to send for him. Having been previously prepared, by a vision teaching him, that the Gentiles were no more to be considered as unclean, but as accepted and privileged to enter the Christian church, Peter accompanied the men who came for him, and went to Cæsarea. There the pious centurion met him, and introduced him to the company of his kinsmen and near friends. The apostle, till now under the influence of Jewish prejudices, yielded to the command of the Spirit,

preached Christ to these Gentiles, and the Holy Ghost accompanying the word, baptized them. When the apostles and brethren in Judea heard of these things, they contended with Peter; but he rehearsed the matter in order unto them, and “they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

Nor was Cæsarea the only place where the influences of the Spirit were poured out upon the Gentiles. At Antioch also, the power of the gospel was displayed. Certain men of Cyprus and Syrene went to that city, and preached the word, not only to Jews but to the Greeks—not only to the proselytes, but to the heathen, and the hand of the Lord was with them. Hearing of this, the church at Jerusalem sent to them Barnabas. After labouring for some time, he went to Tarsus, to seek Saul, and the two apostles returning, continued a whole year “with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

A. D. 44.—CHAPTER V.

Persecutions.—Death of James.—Labours of Peter.—Paul and Barnabas.

THE exalted Head of the church has left on record the promise, “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” This is intended to act as the refiner’s fire: without it, the dross of depravity would abound; with it, through the operations of grace, which those who are tried are led to seek, the pure gold of faith is made to shine. We

are not then surprised, after witnessing so great an outpouring of the Spirit, to see the church brought once more under the storm of persecution.

Herod Agrippa, created by Caligula tetrarch of Galilee, and now exalted by Claudius to be king of Judea, laid hands on James the son of Zebedee, and put him to death.—Thus bringing about the fulfilment in part of the prophecy recorded by Matthew, “Ye shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.” Perceiving that his conduct pleased the Jews, Herod “proceeded further to take Peter also.”

This veteran apostle, whose activity in the cause of his Lord was now as distinguished as his denial of him had formerly been, lay down bound in the prison. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And that prayer was heard. “When Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, ‘Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself

he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

The disciples were assembled at the house of Mary the mother of John, praying. Little did they know how near at hand was the answer to their supplications. Perhaps they were ready to say, Lord, how long?—But lo! a knocking at the door—tidings are brought that Peter stands without—They can scarcely believe for joy. Declaring unto them how the Lord had appeared for their relief, and directing them to go and show these things to James, the apostle of Jerusalem, he departed.

"Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death."

Not only was this arch persecutor disappointed while the church was benefited by his attempts,—he was also signally punished. "Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied."

As the prophets and teachers at Antioch "ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Thus designated to a peculiar work, and sent forth by the Holy

Ghost, the two apostles went as the heralds of salvation to the Gentiles. From a Gentile church already gathered, they went to the cities of the Gentiles round about.

Having travelled fifteen miles to Seleucia, they set sail for the isle of Cyprus, the native land of Barnabas. There they preached in the synagogues of Salamis, and from Salamis passed through the cities and villages until they arrived at Paphos, where Venus held her throne. In that city of licentiousness, whose very worship was an abomination, the faithful witnesses for Jesus published the doctrines of the cross. A noted sorcerer, named Bar-jesus, was at Paphos, endeavouring to arrest the attention of the Roman governor of the island; and, foreseeing his own ruin in the success of the apostles, he withstood them. "Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty, and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness! wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist, and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." "The deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

Loosing from Paphos, Paul and his company came to Perga in Pamphylia. John Mark, who had accompanied them in their journey, returned to Jerusalem.

When they departed from Perga, the heralds of the cross came to Antioch in Pisidia, a province of Asia Minor. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue, and sat down. After the reading of the usual portions of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue in-

vited them to address the people. Then Paul stood up, and preached Jesus. Beginning at the dealings of God with their fathers in Egypt, he passed on to the promise to David, and, after proving the fulfilment of that promise, set before them the awful consequence of rejecting the proffered salvation. "When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."

In the mean time, Paul and Barnabas laboured, doubtless from house to house, and encouraged those who received the truth to continue in the grace of God. When the Sabbath arrived, "almost the whole city" came together to hear the word. The envy of the Jews was now manifest; they "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Full of the spirit of their Master, "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."

Exasperated to the utmost, but destitute of authority, the Jews stirred up certain women of rank, who had become proselytes, and, probably through their means, the chief men of the city, and an edict was obtained banishing Paul and Barnabas as disturbers of the peace. Persecuted in one city, the apostles fled to another: they

shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium. "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."

In Iconium the apostles "went both together into the synagogue, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren. Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles, and when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lyeth round about: and there they preached the gospel."

At Lystra a notable miracle was performed, in consequence of which the people cried out, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people."

When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, "they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out" in the language of rebuke and of instruction against their idolatry. With great difficulty they prevented the sacrifice.

How driven by the wind and tossed is the changeling multitude. Scarcely was the offer of idolatrous adoration over, when certain Jews arriving from Antioch and

Iconium, persuaded the people to stone Paul, and he was drawn out of the city apparently dead. "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Having remained long enough to instruct and establish the new converts, they ordained them elders, or stated pastors in every church, and, commending them to the Lord, they departed.

After some other labours in the provinces of Asia Minor, in three of which they published the glad tidings, the apostles returned to Antioch in Syria. "And when they were come and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

A. D. 51.—CHAPTER VI.

False Teachers.—Council at Jerusalem.

THE heart of man is by nature legal. The idea of doing something to merit salvation is common to all. Until the influences of the Holy Spirit carry home the truth, there is an unwillingness to look to another for justification. No wonder then the false teachers, who came down from Judea to Antioch, found a readiness to listen

when they taught "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Those not established in the gospel are easily disturbed by such pretenders to morality. The church at Antioch, however, was happy in the presence of men capable of directing it aright. Paul and Barnabas met and contended with the enemies of the truth, and fully set forth justification by faith.

More effectually to silence the heresy of justification by works, the friends of the cross resolved to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders. Passing through Phenicia and Samaria, they caused great joy by announcing the conversion of the Gentiles. Arrived at Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and they declared all things that God had done for them.

There were among the disciples at Jerusalem some who, having been of the sect of the Pharisees, were not entirely delivered from the leaven of self-righteousness. These said, concerning the Gentiles, "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. When there had been much disputing," not improbably among the elders, Peter rose up and reminded the assembly how the Lord had made choice of him as an apostle to the Gentiles, and accompanied the word by the transforming energy of the Holy Ghost. "Now, therefore," says he, "why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul,

declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me; my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornications, and from things strangled, and from blood.—Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So, when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.”

A. D. 53.—CHAPTER VII.

Mark.—Timothy.—Galatia.—First Visit to Europe.—Philippi.

THE lingerings of depravity were manifest even in the apostles. Paul and Barnabas, in consequence of a disagreement concerning John Mark, separated. “Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus: and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.”

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus.” This is that Timothy, who was afterward raised to eminence in the church at Ephesus. A signal blessing had been vouchsafed to him, even the instruction of pious ancestors; for unfeigned faith dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. Under the preaching of Paul his soul had been converted—“My own son,” says the apostle—“Timothy, my own son in the faith;” and he now stood to view a youth arrayed in the beauty of holiness. “Him would Paul have to go forth with him, and took and circumcised him, because of the Jews which were in those quarters:” they being unwilling to listen to any one who had not submitted to that rite.

Firm as the apostle was in repelling the idea of justification by the deeds of the law, he had no objection to receiving one of its ceremonies, when so doing would remove the prejudices of unbelievers. Those ceremonies were now things indifferent; therefore, the same care for the prosperity of Zion, which induced him to refuse the circumcision of Titus to the demand of false brethren,

led him to yield the circumcision of Timothy to the clamour of blinded Jews.

The apostle laid hands on the young disciple, transmitting to him "the gift of God,"* and ordaining him for his peculiar work. This act was accompanied by prophecy concerning his future usefulness, and "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."†

Associated as heralds of the cross, Paul and his son Timothy "went through the cities delivering the decrees" of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. "And so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily."

It was probably in this tour that Paul planted the flourishing church of Galatia, to which he afterward wrote his epistle; and he appears to have intended labouring more extensively in the neighbouring regions, but, being forbidden by the Holy Ghost, he went on to Troas, on the coast of the Egean sea. "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." This call to a portion of the Gentile world still farther from Judea, was obeyed. "Immediately," says the inspired Luke, "we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony."

Blessed voyage for the land of our fathers! This is the first account we have of the planting of the standard of

* 2 Tim. i. 16.

† 1 Tim. i. 18, and iv. 14.

the cross in Europe. It is not improbable, that during the previous dispersions, individual Christians had travelled even to the mistress of the world; but Paul and Timothy are the first we read of coming with apostolic authority to lay deep the foundations, and rear high the arches of the gospel church. A brighter light than that of science now approaches the shores of Greece. A nobler triumph than those of the Cæsars is now entering the dominions of Rome. Long had the night of superstition held its sway. The most civilized made debauchery religion, and over by far the greatest number barbarism reigned. Synagogues of the chosen people were scattered through the commercial realms; but save that a few proselytes entered them, they were of comparatively no benefit. Now the prophecies were fulfilling. The glorious renovation seen by Isaiah was beginning to appear. The wilderness and the solitary place were preparing to bloom.

At Philippi, "the Lord opened" the heart of Lydia, "that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, and—she was baptized and her household." Many days the witnesses for Jesus continued their testimony; but Paul having cast a spirit of divination out of a damsel who brought to her masters much gain, they raised a persecution, and Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison. "And at midnight—they—prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that

the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

In the morning the magistrates sent to let them go. But Paul thought proper to plead their Roman citizenship, and to arraign the magistrates for beating them "openly uncondemned," and thrusting them into prison. Greatly alarmed, as knowing themselves exposed to severe penalties, if not to capital punishment, the magistrates hastened to the prison, and "besought them, and brought them out and desired them to depart" from the city. "And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

A. D. 55.—CHAPTER VIII.

Thessalonica.—Athens.—Arcopagus.

FROM Philippi the company of preachers went to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures; opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suf-

ferred, and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.” “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who, coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.”

In this metropolis of learning the apostle spent not his hours in idle admiration. His heart was not led away by the splendour of Grecian architecture to a forgetfulness of Grecian idolatry. The pretensions of the wise men of this world did not make him forget that their wisdom was folly. Though as a man of taste he was interested in the advancement of the arts, as a Christian he was more interested in the salvation of the soul. Eternity he

thought too precious to be sacrificed at the shrine of the renown of time. He came to the warriors of Greece to proclaim a nobler captain than Themistocles, to the philosophers to publish a wiser teacher than Plato, to the legislators to announce a purer lawgiver than Solon. He came to tell of that happiness vainly sought for by the schools, to resolve their doubts, to elevate their views, to open to their enterprise a higher, brighter path than had ever appeared to the serenest hours of their sublimest masters. The Epicureans and the Stoicks encountered him as a setter forth of strange gods; supposing Jesus and Anastasis, or Jesus and the resurrection, were new deities to be added to the old. "And they brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore, what these things mean. (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they

might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." A nobler oration, and of a loftier theme, than had ever been revealed to the researches of the Academy. But "some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." "Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

A. D. 56.—CHAPTER IX.

Corinth.—Gallio.—Journey to Jerusalem.

HAVING discharged his duty at Athens, Paul went to Corinth, a city as remarkable for licentiousness as Athens for idolatry. There he met with Aquila, a native of Pontus in Asia, who, though converted to Christianity, had recently been expelled from Rome as a Jew, by the edict of the emperor Claudius. With him and his wife Priscilla, Paul abode; and, being acquainted with their occu-

pation, and unwilling to use his power in demanding support from those who were just beginning to hear the gospel, he wrought with them at tent-making.

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks. Being joined by Silas and Timotheus, he "was pressed in the Spirit, and testified" still more earnestly that Jesus was the Christ. And when the Jews "opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

The hate of the Jews, combined with the licentiousness of the Greeks, was calculated greatly to discourage the apostle. Alone, save a few humble as himself—unaided by any temporal authority—wielding those doctrines which demanded the surrender of every idol temple and of every legal synagogue, he needed extraordinary aid. True, the Spirit had accompanied his word, and had given him that richest of all rewards to the faithful herald, seals to his ministry,—true, he had the unfailing promise of his Master; but something beside even these appeared now expedient. The Lord, whose wakeful care was ever round him, whose eye was never off him in any moment of his perils, the Lord spake "to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city."

Thus encouraged, the already triumphing apostle went on happy in his labours. And he continued a year and six months, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians.

At length the inveterate hostility of the Jews broke forth in a storm of violence. With one accord they made insurrection against Paul, "and brought him to the judgment-seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews! reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words, and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of no such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat: and Gallio cared for none of those things,"—indifferent concerning his own soul's salvation, ignorant of the truth, and not unwilling that the Jews, generally despised, should be treated with contumely.

After this, Paul, under the kind care and almighty protection of Him whose gospel he still continued faithfully to publish, tarried yet a good while at Corinth, and then took leave of the now numerous and established brethren, and sailed into Syria, taking with him Priscilla and Aquila. Before his departure from Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, he shaved his head in consequence of a vow, probably similar to that of the Nazarite.

Arrived at Ephesus, he "entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast

that cometh—the passover—at Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will.” Leaving his friends Priscilla and Aquila, he sailed from Ephesus.

Landing at Cesarea, he went up to Jerusalem; and, when he had manifested the affection he bore to the church in that city, and improved the season of the passover to the glory of his Lord, he went down to Antioch in Syria. “And after he had spent some time there he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. And a certain Jew, named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and, being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom, when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.”



A. D. 58.—CHAPTER X.

Ephesus.—Labours and Sufferings of Paul.

WHILE Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the inland parts of Asia Minor, increasing,

through the power of God, the numbers and graces of the faithful, arrived at Ephesus. There he found certain persons who had heard of Christ; but he inquired, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? and they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, That they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."

The apostle "went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

We may well admire the providence of God in continuing Paul so long at Ephesus. Like Athens and Corinth, it was a flourishing city, and it was the capital of Asia Minor. Here stood the renowned temple of that Diana, whom all the surrounding world worshipped. Here was the image which popular belief received as having fallen from Jupiter: here were most eminent phi-

losophers and orators: the city itself was on the banks of the Egean sea, so that it was calculated to attract to itself a continual concourse, and possessed peculiar opportunity to sound out the gospel over extensive regions. "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul; so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." The Jews undertook to imitate him: those who were exorcists calling "over them which had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." But "the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." The victory over heathenism was as complete as that over false prophets: many of them that used various arts of magic and sorcery, "brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."

"After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

It is said of Alexander, that, after conquering one world, he sighed for another, in which to exercise his prowess. How similar, but how much more noble was the spirit of Paul. He sighed, not indeed for another

world, but for other regions of the same world, in which to fight the good fight of faith for his Master. His soul was unwilling that a single foot of ground should remain in possession of the powers of darkness. He planned new journeys, not like him of Macedon, to dispossess rightful sovereigns, but to dethrone an usurping tyrant. He anticipated new conquests, not like the man the world calls great, to obtain for himself the riot of intemperance, but to bring down upon his fellows the happiness of heaven. He advanced upon desolation, that he might give it the beauty of Eden—not upon Eden, that he might change it into desolation.

A. D. 60.—CHAPTER XI.

Persecution of Paul at Ephesus.—Epistles of Paul.—His Journeyings.

HAVING purposed to go into Macedonia, and thence by a circuitous route to the metropolis of the world, Paul sent Timothy, his own son in the faith, and Erastus, the late chamberlain of Corinth, to prepare the Thessalonians and others for his coming: but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. While he remained, the rage of idolatry was wrought to its highest degree: “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people.

saying, That they be no gods which are made with hands: so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion: and, having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people the disciples suffered him not." With some difficulty the town clerk appeased the multitude. "We are in danger," said he "to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse."

After the storm had subsided and the outrageous throng departed to their homes, "Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia." There he was exceedingly troubled: but God, who comforteth those who are cast down, comforted him by the coming of Titus, bearing encouraging intelligence from the church at Corinth. More mindful of the converts than of himself, he sent Titus back with the second of his epistles, the first having been forwarded some time before. Not content with giving the counsel contained in these, he, shortly after, paid his third visit to Corinth.

About the same time he wrote his first epistle to Timothy, who was left in charge of the church at Ephesus; and also his epistle to the believers at Rome. In these, as well as all his other epistles, he acted as the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost, conveying the instructions of the

Divine Teacher, not only to Greece and to Rome, but to the whole church to the end of time.—O Thou, who art the Illuminator as well as Sanctifier, we thank thee for these precious instructions.

Having, by forwarding various epistles, as well as preaching in several places, established the churches in the faith, Paul purposed to go by the way of Syria to Jerusalem; but, ascertaining that the Jews were laying wait for him, he resolved to return through Macedonia. A number of companions, apparently messengers of the churches, bearing the contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem, journeyed with him. “These,” says Luke, “going before, tarried for us at Troas.” Here, in a few days, the apostle joined them.

“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together,” as usual, to partake of the Lord’s supper, “Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” A certain young man, named Eutychus, having fallen from the third loft, was taken up dead. By the power of his Master, Paul restored him to his friends alive, to their no small comfort.

“We went,” says the sacred historian, “before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.” Assos is a city of Asia, on the sea coast. There Paul met with his fellow voyagers, and they took him in, and came to Mitylene, in the isle of Lesbos. Thence, along the Archipelago, they sailed over against Chios, and the next day arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day came to Miletus. Thence he sent to Ephesus, about thirty miles distant, and called the elders of the church. “And when they were come to him, he said

unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befel me, by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, That bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that, by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an

inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak: and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship." Happy apostle, who could thus call all to record that he was pure from the blood of all men! Blessed fruit of his labour, many souls under the care of numerous pastors! Who that knows the felicity of being made an instrument of conversion to a single sinner, but would cheerfully share with Paul in his sorrows, for the sake of being blessed with his success?

A. D. 61.—CHAPTER XII.

Tyre.—Cesarea.—Jerusalem.—Paul's Imprisonment.

HAVING torn himself from his beloved children of Ephesus, Paul continued his journey. Arrived at Tyre, he found disciples with whom he tarried seven days. Some of them, perceiving by the spirit of prophecy the persecutions that awaited him, endeavoured, by persuasion, to prevent his going to Jerusalem; but he knew the path of duty to be the only path of real safety, and he

departed. "They," says the sacred historian, "all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. And, when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship." Having finished their course to Ptolemais, they tarried a day, and departed to Cesarea. There they entered into the house of Philip the deacon, already celebrated as an evangelist. Philip had four daughters favoured with the spirit of prophecy. "And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem." "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews, which

are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do, therefore, this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them: Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded, that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them." But though he thus manifested his respect to the prejudices of weaker brethren, whose lingering attachments still clung to the ceremonial, nothing could appease the inveterate enmity of the Jews. Those of Asia, present at the passover, "laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and, further, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place." "And all the city was moved, and the people ran together; and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band that all Jerusalem was in an uproar; who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran

down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done? And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him."

As Paul was about to be led into the castle, he asked permission of the chief captain to speak unto the people. The captain, ascertaining, that, instead of a disturber of the peace, he was a man of respectable character, readily permitted him. And "Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And, when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying, Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith, I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be pun-

ished. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Narrating the command of the Lord, and his instruction and baptism at Damascus, he went on declaring, "it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue, them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle." Oh violence of prejudice and inveterate hostility of the carnal mind! Instead of being mollified by the command of God, and the wondrous fact that the recent leader of persecution now stood confessed a converted herald of the cross, it boils with a vehemence only exceeded by the malice of hell. The chief captain, not knowing any thing of the Gospel, ignorant alike of the prophecies and of the false gloss put upon them by the Jews, supposed

Paul must of course be a man guilty of some heinous immoralities, and bade that he should be examined by scourging. "And, as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free-born. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them." "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men, and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood him by to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. But when Paul perceived that the one part was Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and

resurrection of the dead am I called in question. And, when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided." "And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

A. D. 61.—CHAPTER XIII.

Paul truly Great.—Enmity of the Jews.

WITH the patriot who suffers for his country's cause, we feel a high degree of sympathy. When he enters the dungeon of despotism, or comes forth to the insults of the soldiery, we are ready with our loud acclaim. We fancy what we sometimes call a goddess mourning along with him, bound in the same chain, and o'er the groans of liberty we weep. For the mere soldier who is capable of noble daring, or the senator who fearlessly maintains his people's cause, we feel a deep interest. Why is it that our admirations are so usually allowed to pass by Paul the apostle, or if they fall on him for an instant to be transient in their stay? Is he less than a Cæsar, a Chatham, or a Washington? Was his mind less vigorous, or his erudition less extensive? Was his energy less bold or less persevering? Was the path he trod less important, or were

the enemies he fought less mighty? Were the consequences of his conduct less conspicuous?—when he shook to their foundations the superstitions of Greece, and gave a mortal thrust to the idolatries of Rome?—when, wherever he went, he was the liberating angel to the energies of the mind, and the purifying guide to the affections of the heart?—when, in the might of his Master he raised the nations from the dust, and elevated their views, above all Greek, above all Roman fame?—when, through the power of the Spirit, he achieved liberty not only temporal but eternal, severed not merely the manacles that held the body bound, but those that wrapt the soul? Surely in contemplating his progress we may well admire: in seeing him pass into the dungeon we may well weep: in observing him before the courts of rulers we may well be interested: in reading the result of his labours we may well be fervent in the expression of our gratitude. Were our eyes perfectly enlightened, we should see in Paul a hero as far superior to all the champions of earth, as spirit is superior to matter: we should behold the consequences of his victory stretching forward throughout eternity, and the trophies of his labours shining bright around the throne. Yes, we should see him standing in his place a worshipper on high, and, as he casts his crown at the feet of his Redeemer, we should behold a multitude which no man can number praising that Redeemer for him as an apostle.

An association of the Jews, more than forty in number, resolved that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. And into a league with them entered the chief priests and elders. Paul having heard of it sent word to the chief captain, “And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers

to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; and provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix, sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them; then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause, wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council; whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee, what they had against him. Farewell. Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle; who, when they came to Cesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him." "And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul." And after Tertullus in a studied speech, addressed in courtly guise, had delivered his accusation, Paul answered, "Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the

people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Now, after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult: who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day." Judgment was for that time deferred. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Alas! there is too much reason to fear that convenient season never came. This, however, is certain, that Felix was corrupt, for he "hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years, Portius Festus came into

Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

A. D. 63.—CHAPTER XIV.

Paul's Trial and Defence.

ONE would be ready to exclaim, surely two years imprisonment of the innocent apostle must be sufficient to appease! Surely the Jews, repulsed by the commander at the castle, denied satisfaction by the Roman procurator, foiled in their attempt at assassination—surely they must now be ready to intermit their rage! But no. Neither the goadings of conscience, nor the obstacles thrown in their way, nor the innocence of the suffering prisoner will suffice. They remember that Paul the Christian was once Saul the Pharisee; that he who is now converting the nations was once the leader of their persecution; and dread of his energy and talent unite with the deadliest hate still to pursue him. The new governor having "ascended from Cesarea to Jerusalem," "the high priest, and the chief of the Jews, informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him." This new conspiracy there was every reason to suppose would succeed, for Festus was by no means indisposed to conciliate his new subjects; but that Father who says not a hair of your head shall fall to the ground without my knowledge, had other work for his son. "Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them, therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with

me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cesarea; and the next day, sitting in the judgment seat, commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem, stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove; while he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Cesar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things, whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? unto Cesar shalt thou go." Festus was now in difficulty: the appeal he dared not refuse, for it was the privilege of every Roman citizen, when he conceived that his judges were proceeding improperly against him, to make such appeal; but he had no accusation to send. Agrippa, the son of Herod the persecutor, coming to salute him, he resolved to improve the opportunity by asking advice. When Agrippa, who, though so great a friend of the Romans, was a Jew, understood the matter, he desired to hear Paul himself. Doubtless he was not ignorant of Christianity. The family of the man who put to death James and imprisoned Peter, could not but have known

the cause of their suffering. The monarch of a country where the Saviour had tabernacled, could not but have heard of his miracles. "Agrippa said unto Felix, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. And, on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying, that he ought not to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have something to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him."

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews; especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, (if they would tes-

tify,) that, after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come: for which hope sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? and he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee: to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive for-

giveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom I also speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them. And, when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."

A. D. 63.—CHAPTER XV.

Paul's Journey to Rome.

SHORTLY after his speech before Agrippa, Paul, with other prisoners, set out on his way to Italy, under the care of Julius, a centurion of the emperor's band. And there accompanied him, Aristarchus and Luke, his friends and companions in travel. Their firm attachment had kept them by his side through many a trial; nor would they now desert him. The heart even of the centurion was turned toward the illustrious prisoner, the Most High having made use of the respect which Festus and Agrippa felt toward his servant to lighten his bonds. Arrived at Sidon, Julius courteously permitted Paul to go on shore and refresh himself, by visiting the believers there. At Myrza, a city of Asia Minor, they found a ship, bearing corn from Alexandria. Entering upon her, they sailed slowly, partly on account of her being heavily laden, and partly impeded by contrary winds. "Now, when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast"—the great day of atonement was past, and the danger of the autumnal equinox arrived, "Paul admonished them, and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and the ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul."

Therefore, leaving the place where they might have re-entered, they set out for Phenice, on the west shore of Crete, now Candia. "But not long after there arose

against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon, now Cevanter. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we," says Luke, "let her drive. And running under a certain island, which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which, when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But, after long abstinence, Paul,"—his soul always strengthened by the Almighty to triumph over the storm—"Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now, I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." How much more well grounded his confidence than that of the Roman!—His "quid times" was uttered in the strength of his own heart: Paul's in that of the Eternal. "But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and, when they had gone

a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. And, while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and, when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." Having cast out the wheat into the sea, they at length, "ran the ship aground: and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained immovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land. And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship: and so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land. And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita," now Malta. "And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because

of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit, they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god." So driven by the wind and tossed are the thoughtless multitude.

Oh, how much happier was Paul, in his toilsome journeyings, than were his persecutors. They had a tempest within: he had peace at heart; even the peace of God. And how did Divine Providence lead him. The inhabitants of Malta were called barbarians by the egotism of Greece and Rome, but they were renowned for their humanity to strangers. Nor was this all; the apostle was assisted to work miracles, and he repaid the kindness of the governor of the isle, by healing his father—and in many others did he rebuke diseases, insomuch that he and his companions were honoured with many honours, and when they departed, laden with such things as were necessary. Truly the Lord never forsaketh those who trust in him. The path of duty is always the path of provision.

A ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, took the voyagers to Syracuse; thence they went to Puteoli, on the shore of Italy. There they found brethren, converts to the faith of Christ, and, after tarrying with them a few days, journeyed toward Rome.

What an approach to the city of the Cæsars! More triumphant than that of any of the generals returning from conquered provinces! The eye of common observation saw nothing but an humble man, a prisoner led by a centurion, surrounded by a few lowly followers of the crucified; but the eye of faith beheld in that man a greater than Scipio, a more noble than Augustus. No acclaiming cymbals, or trump of martial note—no flaunting eagles, or chariots hung with trappings—no shouting throng, or lofty arch with victories inscribed—not even a sacrifice hung with garlands, or altar shrouded with incense appeared: but there were angels hovering—the army of God unseen: yes there were legions of celestial ones round about the Appian way. And what did they behold? They saw, in no distant perspective, the altars and the temples of idolatry crumbled, and the banner of the cross waving over the palace of Nero. No wonder the Christians at Rome came to meet the apostle. No wonder they journeyed fifty-two miles to Apii Forum. No wonder, as the intelligence of the approach was spread, others traversed thirty-three miles to the town called the Three Taverns. Nor is it surprising, that, when the apostle saw the believers, he thanked God and took courage. His active soul had long desired to enter upon his labours at Rome. Having preached in the provinces, he wished to publish the gospel in the metropolis. What though martyrdom there might await him? that had no terrors: his spirit was ready. And where could the Apostle of the Gentiles more appropriately win his crown, than in the midst of her who was mistress of the Gentiles?

A. D. 63.—CHAPTER XVI.

Rome.—Nero.—Heathen Morals.—Heroism of Paul.

THE imperial city was the hold of every unclean beast, and the foul cage of every unclean bird. It had sway over the nations of the earth, but it had no sway over itself. More refined than the barbarians, it was more thorough in iniquity. The monster who was its chief, deemed himself privileged to trample under foot every decency, and riot in every base indulgence. To him, imitating Cain was a matter of little moment. He went beyond the fratricide. He murdered his mother. And he was the pupil of the chief moralist of the day, and that moralist was still his counsellor. The people were prepared to applaud, for their religion was licentiousness. They were in the habit of making a god of every one Nero was pleased to favour; and men whose crimes would in Christian lands shut them out of all society, were by them regarded as sufficient idols. No security in private life. Perfidy had become common law: and riot usurped the night as entirely as murder ruled the day. Whatever moral sense remained was blunted: the mind, under the reign of successive tyrants had become so familiarized with vice, that scarcely a man who dared to be virtuous, was found.

Such, if we may believe its own historians, such was this city at the time Paul approached it. The believers were few in number, and scarcely worthy of being classed with its citizens. The Jews had been but a short time previous banished, and were despised as the abettors of sordid superstition.

And how was the apostle to succeed. The power of

Rome sent out its mandates far as the eye of discovery had ranged, and kings trembled before it, and nations vied who should be its most willing slave. Ally of Rome was the most august title a foreign empire could receive, and whenever successions to a vacant throne were disputed, or privileges to worship the gods desired, deputies besieged the senate house, and bowed at the feet of the emperor. The very name of a legion carried with it the assurance of conquest; and from Parthia to Britain, the nations were desirous of offering incense to Cæsar.

Surely a man with no higher authority than citizenship—with no other weapons than learning and talent, could not expect to overturn this sway. With what lightning could he rive the colossus? With what earthquake could he crumble its foundations? Paul reposed not on himself: he went in the strength of the Lord his God. He was treated with peculiar kindness. While the other prisoners were delivered to the captain of the guard, and by him submitted to imprisonment, the apostle was allowed to lodge in his own hired house, with the soldier to whom he was chained.

After three days he “called the chief of the Jews together: and, when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause, therefore, have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this

chain." He doubtless expected that charges had been transmitted from Jerusalem, and that these charges were to be presented before the emperor; but his enemies there seem to have abandoned their cause as hopeless. The Jews said unto him, "We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee." They however had heard of the gospel, and they desired his opinion, for, said they, as for "this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." And they did hear it. For two whole years Paul threw open his house and published the glad tidings to all who would listen. During the time, he was, probably, supported, in great measure, by the labour of his hands. The Lord was with him, and souls were given as seals of his ministry. My bonds, says

he, writing to the Philippians, my bonds in Christ are manifest—where?—in the palace!—Yes under the very eye of the abandoned Nero, red as he was with the blood of slaughtered victims, and lost as he was to all sense of virtue—under the very eye of the dissolute emperor, did the apostle gather converts to his Lord. He came to Rome an appellant to the tribunal of Cæsar, he dwelt at Rome the apostle to the household of Cæsar. And not only in the palace were stars of his crown given, in all other places,* says he, my bonds are manifest. Insomuch, that many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. And there was much to fear. The wrath of man was fierce against the Christians. Tacitus, an historian of the wickedness of that day, speaks of them as a race of men detested. The depravity of the human heart, raging in unblushing vice, of course hated those who testified against it. There was then much to fear. But the disciples were lifted above fear. At the very time when the Roman senators trembled, at the very time when those who led the Roman legions trembled, and many slew themselves to escape the blind madness of Nero, the Christians stood at their post, published the gospel, erected the standard of the cross, and waxed bolder and bolder.—The mighty power of the Spirit of God!

* Phil. i. 12, 13; iv. 22.

A. D. 63.—CHAPTER XVII.

*Success of the Gospel.—Poppea.—Cæsar's Household.—Onesimus.
—Various Epistles.*

FROM a remark made by Josephus, concerning the empress Poppea, there is reason to believe, that she, if not converted, was at least favourably influenced through the labours of the gospel. The historian describes her as a worshipper of the true God; and a Jew would not have given her that title, unless a great change had passed upon her character. She, before the visit of Paul to Rome, was every thing 'abominable:—not only an adulteress, but guilty of the blood of the former wife of Nero. Of this however we are certain, that, whether Poppea was numbered among them or not, there were several converts in Cæsar's household.

And out of the household there was one whose conversion gave Paul a striking opportunity to display the exceeding purity of the gospel. A servant of Philemon, a citizen of Colosse, having run away from his master, came, almost naturally, to Rome, the common centre of corruption. There he, doubtless, expected to pursue an unnoticed service of Satan, and, falling in the train of the emperor's example, to vie with others of his station in wickedness. But he listened to the preaching of Paul; and the same spirit which opened the heart of Lydia, transformed him. He became a believer. It would have conduced much to the apostle's temporal comfort to have retained him, and, of all other claims, he had the strongest upon Philemon. But he resolved to return Onesimus, and not only to return him, but with a request that whatever was due from the servant might be put to his account.

Moreover, he accompanied his return by a letter, the very model of epistolary beauty.—“I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds.—I beseech thee being such an one as Paul the aged and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Could the senate of Rome have condescended to study this veteran apostle, how might they have profited.

Along with the letter to Philemon, Paul sent an epistle to the church at Colosse, associating Tychicus with Onesimus in the bearing of it.

About the same time he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians; and, the Philippians; his own beloved children in the faith, having, by the hand of Epaphroditus their bishop, sent him pecuniary aid, he wrote to them also a volume of rich instruction and consolation, designed for the benefit of the whole militant church.

He, moreover, wrote to his countrymen, the Hebrews, that master piece of argument and eloquence so well calculated to remove their prejudices, and convince them out of the ancient scriptures, that Jesus is the Son of God.

Thus did the Holy Ghost graciously provide for us, while administering to the wants of those cotemporary with Paul.

In his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle expressed his confidence that he should abide and continue with the believers for their furtherance and joy of faith, and he even anticipated visiting Philippi again. This confidence was doubtless not falsely grounded. He is supposed, after the lapse of the two years spoken of by Luke, to have departed from Rome, and gone to the churches in Lesser Asia, and perhaps to the west. From his second Epistle to Timothy, he appears to have returned a second time to Rome.

A. D. 64.—CHAPTER XVIII.

Persecution.—Paul's Sufferings.—His Consolations.—His Triumph.

IN the year 64, the Emperor Nero, as we are well assured, caused Rome to be set on fire. This he did, because he was displeased with the narrow winding streets, and wished room for magnificent pleasure grounds within the city. The indignation of the people knew no bounds. They were inflamed to still greater degrees of hate, by learning, that, during the fire, Nero, after contemplating the scene of woe with pleasure, went to his private theatre, and, in his scenic dress, rehearsed the burning of Troy. Such approach to a perfectly satanic character is to us astonishing. But we are to remember that Nero surrendered himself first to debauchery, and thus his heart became dead to every tender emotion.

Anxious to remove from himself the popular odium, the flagitious emperor, “determined,” says Tacitus, “to transfer the guilt to others.” He selected the Christians; and against them he “proceeded with his usual artifice. He found,” continues the Roman historian, “a set of profligate and abandoned wretches, who were induced to confess themselves guilty, and, *on the evidence of such men*, a number of Christians were convicted.” “They were put to death with exquisite cruelty, and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and left to be devoured by dogs; others were nailed to the cross; numbers were burnt alive, and many covered over with inflammable matter, were lighted up, when the day declined,

to serve as torches during the night. For the convenience of seeing this tragic spectacle, the emperor lent his own gardens. He added the sports of the circus, and assisted in person, sometimes driving a curricule, and occasionally mixing with the rabble in his coachman's dress."²*

In the midst of these horrors we may behold the Apostle of the Gentiles. He is supposed to have been drawn to Rome by the sufferings of the Christians, and to have been, as one of them, made prisoner. The farewell letter to his beloved Timothy shows us what was the state of his heart in the final hour. With all the firmness of a veteran, he exhorts the disciple to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and to endure hardness as a good soldier. I," says he, "endure all things for the elects' sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. If we suffer we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us." Recalling the attention of Timothy to his apostolic career, and repeating many precious words of wisdom, he counsels him to continue in the things which he had learned, and been assured of. "Knowing," he continues, "of whom thou hast learned them: and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

"I," says he, "am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me

at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

When first summoned before the tribunal he was deserted by all his friends. Like his Divine Master in a similar hour—"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me." He had, however, a better than human help.—"The Lord stood with me and strengthened me."

From his first trial he was rescued—"I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.—And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." In the interval between this deliverance, and his receiving the crown, he wrote his final epistle. In, as is supposed, the year 66, he was released to that rest where he shines as the brightness of the firmament, and shall shine as the stars forever.

Happy Paul! of no moment to thee was the sword of the executioner, or the taunting scoff of the rabble! Of no moment to thee was the power of the prefect, or the more ungovernable rage of the emperor! Thy soul was superior to Nero, and even when going forth to the grave, thou wast enabled to behold that everlasting city, where the Lamb in the midst of the throne has fed thee and led thee to living fountains of waters, and God himself has wiped away all tears from thine eyes!

A. D. 60—62.—CHAPTER XIX.

James, Bishop of Jerusalem.

LED by the sacred historian, we have followed the career of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, though

not the founder, was, by eminence the spiritual father, of the church at Rome, as well as of numerous other churches. In the path of the scriptures we have travelled with him to the period of his departure to a more noble service. Now it will become us to retrace our steps, and inquire concerning some other members of that holy band, who were privileged to labour and to suffer so eminently for Christ.

We have already seen the death of James, the son of Zebedee, who was slain by Herod. We are informed by an ancient writer,* that "the man who had drawn him before the tribunal, when he saw the readiness with which he submitted to martyrdom, was struck with remorse, and by one of those sudden conversions not infrequent amidst the remarkable outpourings of the Spirit, was himself turned from the power of Satan to God, and confessed Christ with great cheerfulness. They were both," continues the account, "led to execution, and in the way the accuser requested the apostle's forgiveness, which he soon obtained. James turning to him, answered, Peace be to thee, and kissed him, and they were beheaded together."

The other James appears to have been pre-eminent in the church at Jerusalem. Whenever the apostles, Paul and others, visited that city, they, says scripture, "went in unto James." Peter, James, and John, says an eminent ancient historian, after the ascension of our Saviour, though they were preferred by the Lord, yet challenged not this prerogative unto themselves, but appointed James the Just, Bishop of Jerusalem. The surname of Just was given to him on account of the remarkable blame-

* Eusebius.—See Milner.

lessness of his character. About the year 60, he wrote his catholic epistle. This was addressed to the Jews throughout the world, and was, in some degree, levelled at those who wrested the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith to their own destruction; proving, most strenuously, that works are as certainly in faith, as fruit in a tree, and that that which produces not works is not faith. The character of those to whom he addressed his epistle, was, doubtless, a reason why he dwelt to so peculiar an extent upon the subject of works. They being Jews, zealous for the law, and ready to bring false charges against the gospel, there was the greater necessity for proving to them the practical nature of the gospel.

His faithfulness in rebuking their vices brought upon him the anger of his adversaries. The rulers of the Jews uniformly hated him on account of his Christianity, but they could obtain no opportunity of wreaking their malice. Disappointed in their attempt to destroy Paul, their enmity was sharpened, and their wish to destroy increased, but the Roman government was an obstacle. Not having power over life, and not being able to infuse their prejudices into the minds of those in temporal authority, they sought in vain for the death of their victim.

At length, the president of Judea dying, the time that elapsed previous to the coming of a successor was seized upon. James was no Roman citizen. He was simply a Jew, and, therefore, might be violently slain with more impunity.

“Ananias, the high priest, a Sadducee, and a merciless persecutor, holding the supreme power, called a council, before which he brought James with some others, and accused them of breaking the law of Moses.” This however did not succeed. The holy life of the apostle

had gained him the respect even of his unconverted countrymen, and it was difficult to procure a sentence against him. Moreover, though a faithful disciple, he had continued to pay considerable attention to the rites of the law, and, though not accounting them necessary to salvation, had observed many of them. The opposition of the people had by this means been softened, and their disposition to respect him increased.

The great men, however, were not willing to surrender their aim. They "were uneasy on account of the vast increase of Christian converts by his means, and endeavoured to entangle him, by persuading him to mount a pinnacle of the temple, and to speak to the people, assembled at the time of the passover, against Christianity. James, being placed aloft, delivered a frank confession of Jesus, as then sitting at the right hand of power, and who should come in the clouds of heaven. Upon this Ananias and the rulers were highly incensed. To disgrace his character was their first intention. This had failed. To murder his person was the next, and the attempt was of much more easy execution. Crying out, that Justus himself was seduced, they threw him down and stoned him. The apostle had strength to fall on his knees, and to pray, "I beseech thee, Lord God and Father, for them, for they know not what they do." One of the priests, moved with the scene, cried out, "Cease, what do you mean? This just man is praying for you." A person present, with a fuller's club beat out his brains, and completed his martyrdom."

We may well apply to him the words of his own epistle, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

The testimony of Josephus to the character of this apostle, is very remarkable. Speaking of the calamities the Jews endured, he says, "These things happened to them by way of revenging the death of James the Just, the brother of Jesus, whom they call Christ. For the Jews slew him, though a very just man." Indeed so great was his integrity, that the current remark among the unconverted at Jerusalem, was, "What a pity so good a man should be a Christian!"

The new Roman governor visited this death upon Ananias, for he not only reprimanded, but deprived him of the high priesthood.

CHAPTER XX.

Peter.—His Labours.

OF the Apostle Peter, Holy Scripture has recorded comparatively few details. While the journeyings of the Apostle of the Gentiles are narrated with minuteness, and their record continued almost to the period of his martyrdom, of Peter we learn but little, except from other than inspired historians. He is supposed to have laboured much among the Jews scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; the same to whom he afterward directed his epistles. Being, by eminence, the Apostle of the circumcision, he undoubtedly devoted the greater part of his time to Judea. "He and John were sent by the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria, whence they returned to Jerusalem. When Paul came to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion,

he found Peter there. Upon occasion of the tranquillity of the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, near the end of the reign of Caligula, Peter left Jerusalem, and visited the churches in several parts of that country, particularly at Lydda and Joppa, where he tarried many days. Thence he went to Cesarea, by the sea-side, where he preached to Cornelius and his company. Thence he returned to Jerusalem; and some time afterwards was imprisoned there by Herod Agrippa. This brings down his history to the year 44. A few years after this he was present at the council of Jerusalem; nor is there any evidence that he came there merely on that occasion. It is more probable that he had not yet been out of Judea: soon after that council he was at Antioch, where he was reproved by St. Paul." Several circumstances lead us to suppose he was not at Rome previous to Paul's first visit to that city. "In the last chapter of his epistle to the Romans, Paul salutes many by name, without mentioning Peter, and the whole tenor of the epistle makes it reasonable to think that the Christians there had not yet had the benefit of the apostle's presence and instructions. During his two years confinement at Rome, Paul wrote four or five epistles; those to the Ephesians, the second epistle to Timothy, to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon; in none of which is any mention made of Peter, nor is any thing said or hinted whence it can be concluded that he had ever been there."

But though Judea appears to have been the appropriate field of his labours, and it is evident he did not precede Paul in the metropolis of the Gentiles, there is reason to suppose that he visited the ancient Babylon, for in his first epistle he sends the salutation of the church in that city.

About the year 63, Peter went to Rome. There he met a second time with Simon Magus, the baptized infidel, whom he had formerly rebuked at Samaria. The imperial city, corrupt to the very core, and guarded by an emperor who was the great patron of all iniquity, furnished followers in abundance to the sorcerer. The world wandered after him. It is said that he was even worshipped, a story by no means improbable, when we remember that the learned of that day erected altars to every thing they chose to admire. Peter opposed him successfully, insomuch that he ended his life in disgraceful misery.

CHAPTER XXI.

Peter.—His Death.

“IN his second epistle, Peter says the Lord had shown him that his death was soon to take place. And this gives a degree of credibility to a story of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, related in one of his discourses, the purport of which is, that, the pagans being inflamed against him, the brethren begged him to retreat during the violence of the persecution. Their entreaties moved him, ardent as he was for martyrdom. He began to go out of the city by night. But coming to the gate, he saw Christ entering into the city. Whereupon he said, Lord, whither art thou going? Christ answered, I am coming hither to be crucified again. Peter hence understood that Christ was to be crucified again in his servant. This induced him voluntarily to return, and he satisfied the minds of the

brethren with this account, and was soon after seized and crucified. Whoever considers the very solemn manner in which our Lord foretold the violent death of this apostle, in the close of St. John's Gospel, and that in his second epistle, as we have already mentioned, he himself declares that his Divine Master had shown him that he should publicly put off his tabernacle, will find no difficulty in conceiving, that the vision now related from Ambrose, might have taken place a little before the writing of this epistle, as that may have a little time preceded his apprehension and violent death."

The apostle saw his wife led forth to martyrdom, rejoiced at the grace of God vouchsafed to her, and addressing her by name, exhorted and comforted her with Remember the Lord.

At the same time with his beloved brother Paul, Peter himself received the crown. He suffered crucifixion with his head downward, a kind of death which he himself preferred, most probably from his unfeigned humility, not wishing to die in the same manner that his Lord had done.

Faithful apostle, well didst thou manifest a true repentance for thy denial. Long years of unremitting labour, catholic epistles breathing the spirit of the gospel, imprisonment, scourging, and, at length, death, testify that that weakness which trembled before a servant maid, was completely removed, that watchfulness took the place of presumption, and firm reliance the place of wavering faith. Thy intrepidity in Jerusalem, thy constancy in the synagogues, thy firmness under Nero, are to us examples, and while thy trials should excite our thankfulness for the temporal peace we enjoy, they should at the same

time lead us to inquire whether we are partakers of that spiritual peace which was thy support.

“There are,” says Milner, “two striking attestations to the character of Peter which may be fairly drawn from the sacred writings. As it is allowed on all hands that he authorized the publication of St. Mark’s Gospel, had he been disposed to spare his own character, he had not suffered the shameful denial of his master to have been described, as it is in that evangelist, with more aggravated circumstances of guilt, and with fainter views of his repentance, than are to be found in the other evangelists. In his second epistle he gives the most honourable attestation to the Apostle Paul’s epistles, though he must know, that in one of them, that to the Galatians, his own conduct on a particular occasion was censured. This is evidently above nature. The most unfeigned humility appears to have been an eminent part of the character of this apostle, who, in his early days, was remarkable for the forwardness of his temper. His natural character was no uncommon one. Frank, open, active, courageous, sanguine in his attachments, and in his passions, no way deficient, but not eminent in understanding, a plain, honest man, yet, by grace and wisdom supernatural, made only inferior to Paul, and an instrument of the greatest good in the conversion of numbers. He seems to have lived long in a state of matrimony, and, by Clements’ account, was industrious in the education of his children.”

The providence of God in apportioning different talents to different fields of labour is strikingly manifest. We perceive it even in the days of the apostles, a period when the general effusion of extraordinary gifts appeared to make it less necessary. Paul, by his acquaintance with Grecian literature, was fitted to contend with the philoso-

phers, and by his familiarity with Mosaic law was fitted to counsel the Hebrews; nor was his privilege of Roman citizenship without avail. Peter, by his plain frankness, and even forwardness of character, was fitted to the multitude of Palestine; while James, by the unblemished consistency of the whole course of his life, was calculated to soften the prejudices of Jerusalem. They were all three martyrs to that carnal mind which hates true piety in its every form, but while they lived they were the more acceptable to their several spheres from their very diversity. Praised be the Lord for his goodness in overruling even the multifarious circumstances of character to the advancement of his heavenly kingdom. Glory be to His name for thus condescending to our weakness.

CHAPTER XXII.

Destruction of Jerusalem.—Prophecy of our Lord.—Seditions, &c.

“WHEN ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” Such was the prediction of our blessed Lord during the period of his incarnation. The peculiar ceremonial given to the Jews was made useless by the Gospel; it was sent to prefigure, and therefore, in the will of God, it was, of course, to pass away. The temple, its altar, its priests, its offerings, the blood of sacrifices, and the cloud of incense would no longer be necessary, when the throne in the Heavens should have been sprinkled with the blood of the “Lamb slain from the foundation,” and the voice, “It is finished,” should have left the lip of the sacrifice.

But there were other reasons why the temple was doomed to destruction. The blood of the only begotten Son of God, sprinkled by the voice of their own imprecation on the heads of the Jews, not as the blood of atonement, but as the blood of condemnation, cried against them for vengeance. Jerusalem was guilty of the death of Christ. That which, in the counsels of eternity, it had been determined should be shed, was, by the flagitiousness of the Jews, shed in such manner as to constitute their crime. Like the corrupt human race to which they belong, perverting the best of Heaven's gifts and turning that which was meant for deliverance, into the occasion of deep damnation.

Our Lord determined the overthrow. He saw from afar the mustering of the armies of his wrath. He beheld as already burning, those fires of awful denunciation which were to devour the Jews, the city, the temple, and blast with perpetual barrenness the mount once glorious in splendours—He saw, and seeing, prophesied. His prophecy was fulfilled.

Caligula, the successor to Tiberius, as Emperor of Rome, demanded that his statue should be placed in the temple. This was the usual practice of the Romans to enthrone the effigies of their rulers among the images of their gods, and to pay them adoration. The Jews, however, resisted the demand, and with force of arms; and the emperor, whose statue they were required to worship being assassinated, they were freed from the demand.

But they were not freed from trouble. Under the Emperor Claudius, the successor to Caligula, they were visited with famine, the same that, in the Acts of the Apostles, was foretold by Agabus, the prophet: the same

in which Paul and Barnabas bore the Christians at Jerusalem, the contributions of the church of Antioch.

After Pilate had committed suicide, and Herod, who was placed in the supremacy of Judea, had been smitten by the vengeance of God, Felix, the brother of Pallas, the reigning favourite at Rome, exerted his power of government to the extreme wo of the Jews. By oppression, rapine, and every species of cruelty, he made them feel that God is not a man that he should lie, that when he hath said he will do it; when he hath spoken he will make it good. The Roman, though a stranger to God, save that he had heard of Him from the lips of Paul, was nevertheless, an instrument of vengeance. Drusilla, the descendant of Cleopatra, was his wife, and she, doubtless, true to her origin, proved no idle prompter to Felix.

Various seditions occurred: in one of which, under Pilate, a multitude was slain: in another, under Claudius, thirty thousand fell. Added to these, under Nero, beside a quarrel among the priests, which caused great distress, multitudes of armed ruffians, even by day, and in the midst of the sacred solemnities, put to death a great number. Theudas, who enticed many to their destruction, was spoken of by Gamaliel; a band of deluded men fell also by the sword of the Romans. Oh, wretched was even the peace they enjoyed, to the devoted Jews. God had set on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and there was none to help.

Many who were eminent citizens were scourged by the command of Florus, and nailed to the tree. This governor added avarice to the vices of his predecessor, and ground the seditious victims without mercy. Fired with indignation, the Jews broke out in open rebellion. Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, assembled a nume-

rous army, and penetrated even to the walls of Jerusalem. But the revoltors were victorious, and Nero sent Vespasian to quell them. In the space of two summers he subdued the whole country, and made himself master of all its strong holds, among the rest of Jotapata, where commanded Josephus the historian, whom the Roman general held a prisoner in his camp.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Destruction of Jerusalem.—Warnings.—The Christians.

AND now approached the year 70, the period prophecy had pointed out. The days began to come, in which the enemies of Jerusalem were to cast a trench about her and compass her round, and keep her in on every side, and lay her even with the ground, and her children within her: days of great tribulation, such as were not from the beginning of the world, neither again shall be. The word of our Lord, and the prayer that their flight might not be in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, were beginning to appear.

We are told of various warnings at this time in Jerusalem. "Portents and prodigies," says even a heathen historian, "announced the ruin of the city." Swords were seen glittering in the air; embattled armies, says Josephus, appeared, and the temple was illuminated by a stream of light that issued from the heavens. A hollow murmur was heard by the priests in the sanctuary, and a voice issuing from the Holy of Holies, "Let us go hence." This was during the feast of

Pentecost. A man, like in conduct to one of the ancient prophets, went up and down declaring, "A voice from the east! A voice from the west! A voice from the four quarters of the world! A voice against Jerusalem! against the temple, and all new married brides and bridegrooms! A voice against the whole body of the people!" Seized and dragged before the magistrate, his only cry was "Wo to Jerusalem!"

But what was directly exterminating, dissensions multiplied among the people. False prophets arose; heresies abounded; sects rancorous against each other, enveloped all in confusion. The most bitter hatred seemed to have rooted itself in every heart. The land became a theatre of horror, rapine, and mutual slaughter. Some respite from Roman assault having been given in consequence of the contest between Vitellius and Vespasian for the empire, that was improved as the seedtime of discord. Three powerful factions divided the whole nation; each faction had its leader. Eleazer, who was at the head of the zealots, made himself master of the temple. John of Giscala ruled the city. Simon, son of Gioras, was the leader of the rabble. Their contests deluged Jerusalem with blood. John was driven to the summit of Mount Moriah, and held possession of Salem and Bezetha, the most populous portions.

The Christians, seeing their time,—the encompassing armies of Rome beheld approaching, retired to a place of safety, provided for them by the providence of their Lord. Oh methinks He was almost ready again to exclaim, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them who are sent unto thee, how oft would I have gathered thee, even as a hen gathereth her

chickens under wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Destruction of Jerusalem.—Treachery of the Jews.—Assault by Titus.—Massacre in the Temple.

TITUS approached. He had been left in command by his father Vespasian, now Emperor of Rome. Titus approached.—Early in the spring he encamped before the walls. “The Jews,” says Tacitus, “appeared in force on the plains, under the ramparts, determined, if successful, to push their advantage, and, if obliged to give ground, sure of a retreat. A battle was fought, but with doubtful success. The Jews took shelter within their walls; venturing, however, for several days afterwards, to sally out in small parties, till tired by repeated losses, they resolved to shut themselves up within their fortifications. Titus prepared to carry the place by storm.” The season of the passover had drawn great crowds to the devoted spot from all parts of the land. The natural clemency of Titus induced him to offer terms of capitulation. Instead of their being accepted, a burst of lamentation assailed the ears of the legions. They looked and saw advancing, from one of the gates, a wretched band of mourners, stretching forth their hands, and with hideous cries and dismal shrieks, imploring the protection of the Romans from the barbarous cruelty of their fellow citizens. The soldiers were touched with compassion. Without waiting for the command of their officers, they went in a

body to succour the distressed, and conduct them to their tents. In that moment the treachery was manifest. The notes of grief were changed to warlike shouts. The traitors surrounded the generous soldiers, and, brandishing their daggers, rushed to the attack with the fury of the vilest assassins. The Romans were massacred on the spot." This stratagem kindled a spirit of revenge throughout the Roman army. Titus, however, still wished to spare the effusion of blood. He saw a deluded people reposing on the hope of universal empire, while, at the same time, they were pent up within their walls, distracted by intestine factions, the streets of their city every day drenched with the blood of massacre; his heart was touched with compassion. He wished to sheathe the slaughtering sword, and offered a general pardon, but in vain. The whole nation was infatuated, and ripe for destruction.

The soldiers, in their eagerness to begin the attack, threw up forts and battering rams with the greatest alacrity. Their first impression was made on Salem, or the lower city, on the northwest side of Jerusalem. Simon, who commanded there, exerted himself, but the Romans, opening a breach in the walls, rushed in sword in hand. Thence they fought their way until they entered Bezetha, another quarter of the city, on the north. The Jews fled in consternation, but Titus paused in the moment of victory. Clemency resumed her influence. Surely Divine Providence, in the character of the executioner of its vengeance, proffered the Jews full opportunity either to repent or to display an incorrigible delusion. They preferred the latter. Titus, though wounded, ordered his men to give quarter to all that laid down their arms. The runaways took shelter in the tower Antonia.

But they attributed the forbearance of the Roman commander to despair and cowardice. John and Simon, breathing for a moment from their quarrels, united, and poured down their forces like a torrent. Content with his victory, and not wishing a disadvantageous exposure of his troops, Titus sounded a retreat, and returned to his camp.

The few days necessary to prepare for a second assault, was more destructive to the Jews than the sword of the conquering Romans. Their internal dissensions broke out with redoubled fury. Simon regarded the temporary retreat of the besiegers as an assurance of their overthrow. He immediately surrendered himself to the views of ambition. Content with nothing short of entire supremacy, he encouraged his partisans to the most horrid excesses upon their countrymen. John, also, fired with the same spirit, meditated an attack upon Eleazer, who still held possession of the inner part of the temple. Providing a band of assassins, he directed them to mingle with the crowd who approached to offer sacrifice. A dreadful scene of horror and murder followed. The ruffians, skilled in their trade, threw off their upper garments, and brandishing their poniards, struck a general panic. The zealots of Eleazer's party rushed out of the temple with precipitation. The innocent multitude clung to the altar, no longer a sanctuary. All were put to death without distinction. By this outrage, one of the three factions was annihilated, and those of John and Simon divided empire.

Is not the heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!

Titus was aware of the proceedings within the city, but he pushed on his preparations with vigour, anxious to

terminate the siege. At length his legions advanced. The Jews gave way, and fled for shelter to Sion and Mount Moriah. Their enemies advanced, and, destroying the houses, Titus made Salem the site of his camp.—Still from the tower Antonia, the Temple, and Mount Sion, the Jews could annoy the approach of their enemies extensively. To dislodge them, towers were necessary. Immediately the Romans commenced, under every disadvantage, and with immense labour. Their towers ascended. In the valley at the foot of Mount Moriah, they rose, threatening complete destruction to the besieged. The common danger reunited all parties. John and Simon once more united council. They sallied. The Romans gave way. The Jews pursued them. All was uproar, confusion, and terror. Titus, however, rallied his legions, and the Jews were repulsed. They fled, were pursued, taken prisoners, or put to the sword. John and Simon, with their surviving followers, retreated to their former station.

Titus carried on his works. In the mean time a dreadful famine laid waste Jerusalem. “The streets were covered with the dead and dying; old men, women, and children, stretched forth their hands for sustenance, and expired in the act; the wounded soldiers perished for want of relief; shrieks, and groans, and lamentations resounded in every quarter; the surviving wretches envied the fate of those who died first; they lived only to prolong their misery, fixing their eyes on the temple, and invoking death to end their woes. The rites of sepulture were neglected. It was necessary, however, to remove the dead bodies. John and Simon ordered them to be thrown down the steep into the lower city. Titus went to view the unhappy victims, as they lay in heaps under

the walls. Shocked at a scene so melancholy and affecting, he lifted up his hands to heaven, and called the gods to witness that he was not the cause of those dreadful calamities." No, it was the infatuation of those who cried "His blood be on us and on our children"

CHAPTER XXV.

Destruction of Jerusalem.—Discord.—Misery.—Success of the Romans.—Anguish of Josephus.

UNLIKE that of Titus, the hearts of John and Simon seem to have been dead to all emotion. They beheld the sufferings of their fellows, as the tiger contemplates the sorrows of the kid. Indeed they let loose new forms of horror. "Under their direction, plunder and massacre went on with unrelenting fury. A band of assassins continued prowling about in quest of prey. They searched every house; and where they saw an appearance of health, they seized the wretched family, and dragged them like so many criminals to the rack, in order to make them discover in what secret place they laid up their slender hoard of victuals. The two leaders converted every thing to their own use. Distress and misery went on increasing, and deeds that shocked humanity, were committed in the face of day. Fathers took the nourishment from their children, and sons seized it from their mothers. In return, a woman of the name of Mary, who in the beginning of the war, removed with all her substance from beyond the Jordan, to take shelter in Jerusalem, committed an outrage that cannot be related without horror.

A band of ruffians carried off her little store of corn. Enraged by that act of violence, she seized her infant, then at her breast, and, in despair and frenzy, plunged a poniard in its heart. Nor did she stop there: the cravings of hunger were to be appeased. She cut her babe in pieces, and devoured the fruit of her womb. The smell of victuals soon attracted a banditti of freebooters. They broke into the house; and, though inured to murder, they recoiled with horror at a sight so barbarous and inhuman. The story was soon divulged; it spread through the city, and reached the Roman camp. Titus heard it with astonishment. He heaved a sigh, and mourned the lot of humanity. His towers, his platforms, and his war-like engines were completed; his slingers and archers were at their posts; and his whole army panted for an opportunity to display their valour; but he himself was still restrained by the tenderness of his nature. He caused a general amnesty to be proclaimed, in favour of all who should make a voluntary surrender; and, at the same time, bound himself by a solemn promise to preserve the city, the temple, and the religion of the people. Numbers embraced the offer, and rushed out of the gates on every side; but the vengeance of Heaven pursued a devoted race. The wretched fugitives, in their way to the Roman camp, passed through the lines of the Arabs, who had listed under the banners of Titus. A soldier of that nation" discovering that a Jew had swallowed some gold, a notion was diffused "abroad, that all the Jews had adopted the same stratagem to secrete their money. Full of that idea, the Arabs rushed with fury on the defenceless multitude," and destroyed them to obtain their hidden treasure. "The Romans followed the example, and a scene of blood and carnage continued,

till Titus, fired with indignation, checked the fury of his men, and gave the promised protection to all that escaped the massacre” What a tissue of horrors is history! “There is no flesh in man’s obdurate heart: it does not feel for man.”

“Titus found that his lenity, instead of making an impression on the Jewish mind, was considered by that obstinate people as a proof of weakness. He determined, therefore, to make one vigorous effort, and let the enemy see the strength and valour of the Roman army. His operations were directed against Fort Antonia.” John and Simon sallied, with intent to set fire to the works of the besiegers. The zealots, armed with torches and firebrands, advanced with eagerness. The utmost fury raged. Death rode the storm, and the passions of hell were abundantly let loose. But the Jews were forced to retire.

Following up their advantage, the Romans advanced their battering rams, and the tower Antonia was taken by storm. “The Jews who escaped the sword, fled in dismay and terror to the temple, which they considered as a safe asylum: still convinced that a sanctuary, of which the God of Abraham was the protector, would never yield to the Roman arms.” Alas! their sins had provoked the God of Abraham to leave them, and over the temple itself were now suspended his vials of vengeance.

“Titus had gained an eminence from which his warlike engines could play with advantage on the enemy. The approaches to the temple lay exposed to the valour of his legions. His clemency made him suspend his operations. To save the sanctuary, and even to protect the people in the exercise of their religion, was still the

wish of his heart. He despatched Josephus with terms. Josephus had an interview with John; but nothing could alter the obstinacy of a blind fanatic, “who, by his manifold crimes, provoked the wrath of an offended God; and, at the same time, was so infatuated as to expect the Divine protection. Josephus, though reviled as a traitor to his country, and a slave to the Romans, made use of every argument to open the eyes of the people; he represented to them the horrors of inevitable destruction; heaven and earth combined against their city; and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed, ‘I see, at length, too late I see, that I am struggling against the will of God. Titus wishes to save you from desolation, and your doom is pronounced above. It is God, a powerful, an avenging God, who sends the Romans to bury all in ruin. Repentance may still efface your crimes; contrition of heart may arrest the impending vengeance; save yourselves and your holy city; save your temple, the wonder of the universe; Titus wishes to preserve that noble structure; do not be worse enemies to yourselves, than even the Romans, who hold the sword over your heads, and still, in mercy, forbear to strike the fatal blow.’ He could no more; a flood of tears oppressed his voice; he turned his eyes to the temple, heaved a sigh, and returned to Fort Antonio.”

Oh magnificent structure! might a faithful Jew, beholding at a distance cry, thou palace of the King of kings, worthiest of all palaces for splendour upon earth—tower of strength—pillar of glory—where the chosen tribes so oft have worshipped—where the cloud of incense so oft has risen—where accepted hecatombs so oft have bled—must thy grandeur perish?—Must thou sink like the meteor of the night?—Must thou perish from the sacred

mount?—Where shall the Most High find a dwelling upon earth?—*In the contrite heart.*—Where shall the wandering outcasts find communion with their God?—*At the foot of the cross.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

Destruction of the City and Temple.

“TITUS saw that his moderation served only to confirm the obstinate, and, by protracting the siege, to expose his men to ambuscades, and the danger of sudden skirmishes with a people inured to craft and stratagem. He called a council of war. The principal officers were of opinion that nothing less than the utter destruction of the temple would secure a lasting peace. A building which the Jews themselves had made a theatre of blood, ought not, they contended, to be any longer considered as a place of worship. It was rather a citadel, in which the garrison remained in force, and, since the proffered capitulation was rejected, ought to be given up to the fury of an enraged soldiery. Titus concurred with his officers in every point, except the demolition of the inner part of the temple. That he still resolved to save; but, as Josephus observes, a superior council had otherwise ordained. God, in his justice, had decreed the fall of Jerusalem; and Titus, unconscious of his mission, was the agent to execute the will of heaven.

“On the following day the general assault began. The Romans advanced under their military shell to the outward wall of the temple. The Jews sallied out, and a

fierce engagement followed. Nothing, however, could break through the close embodied lines of the legions. The besieged gave way, and, finding themselves pursued with impetuous fury, fled for shelter to the inner court. The Romans entered sword in hand. The battle was renewed with redoubled ardour. The combatants were confined to one spot. For the Jews, no room for flight; the Romans fought to end the war. The cries of the dying, and the shouts of the victors, reverberated by the surrounding walls, filled the place with dreadful uproar. The orders of Titus and his officers were no longer heard. The Jews, in some parts, fought with frantic obstinacy. Numbers, in despair, fled to the sanctuary. There, the false prophets still assured them, that the Lord of Hosts was on their side. In that instant the besiegers forced the gates. The massy gold and glittering ornaments inspired them with new ardour. The love of plunder conspired with revenge; and Titus exerted himself in vain to restrain their fury. One of the soldiers mounted to the top of the portico, and threw a combustible weapon, which clung to the wood-work, and set fire to the whole building.”—Where now was the arm that slew Sennacherib?—where the power that overthrew Pharaoh?—where the might of that Omnipotent, who, for long, long centuries defended the chosen people?—That arm was not shortened—that power was not lessened—that Omnipotent existed—but Jerusalem had sinned—had sinned beyond all sufferance.—Hence from his cloudy pavilion, he looked down—“ *I called, and ye refused—I stretched forth my hand, and ye would not regard.*” Methinks there was a voice echoing in the ears of the dying—“ *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.*”

The Jews saw that all was lost, and in their last agony

sent forth the groan of an expiring people. Titus withdrew from the scene of desolation, lamenting that his efforts to save the place were without effect. As he passed along, word was brought to him, that a number of priests stood on the outside wall, imploring him to spare their lives. "It is too late," said Titus, "the priests ought not to survive their temple." He retired to Fort Antonio; and there beholding the conflagration, and lifting up his hands, exclaimed, with a sigh, "The God of the Jews has fought against them: to him we owe our victory."

Roman! thy words were true!

John and Simon, with a number of their followers, found their way into the upper city, on Mount Sion. But the courage of the Jews perished with their temple. Seeing it in flames, they thought themselves abandoned by their God, and wanted to surrender. Even in that distress, they were still distracted by intestine factions. Their leaders declared a fixed resolution to hold out to the last. True to their unrelenting spirit, they continued their tyranny; and, in addition to this, a devouring famine raged in every quarter. Again the Romans advanced, preparing to assault. The chiefs thought it time to capitulate. But Titus refused all short of an unconditional surrender; save that he promised to spare life. John and Simon received the proffered terms with indignation. They talked of nothing but dying at their post. "But their words and actions were at variance. They abandoned the public interest, and basely hid themselves in subterraneous vaults, in hopes of eluding the fury of the conqueror. The legions battered a breach, and entered the city sword in hand. A dreadful carnage followed. Neither sex nor age was spared. The buildings were set on fire, and, excepting the three towers, the whole

city of Sion was laid in ruins. As soon as the rage of slaughter ceased, all that escaped the general carnage were selected together, and disposed of according to their deserts. 'The most active incendiaries were put to death; some were reserved to grace the victor's triumph; and the rest were sent into Egypt and sold to slavery.'

Thus perished Jerusalem, the throne of God on earth. Scattered to the four winds, its people wandered to proclaim, how awful is the anger of Justice—how tremendous the wrath of the Avenger. Oh, city of Zion's solemnities, when beholding thee a wilderness, we may well tremble at the view of those sins of our own which are deserving of punishment. If God spared not thee, well may we tremble, lest he refuse to spare us.

Bright is the hope, that the blood sprinkled by their own imprecation on the heads of the Jews, will yet gather them into the fold of salvation—that they will yet live by him they slew.

But the prophecy has been fulfilled, and the majesty of God has been vindicated:—that blood trampled under foot has been avenged:—that Spirit scorned and resisted, has been avenged; and now there is an order gone abroad to all the nations of Christendom, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and say unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned."

Eleven hundred thousand perished in the siege, and 1750 years the Jews have been without an altar, without a sacrifice, without a priest, without a dwelling place.

Blessed be God, they are now coming home. There is a decree in the councils above—the Spirit has gone forth in their hearts on earth—they are not forgotten—they shall not be forgotten—they shall be brought to the

Lord, and “with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads—they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever.”

The children of Abraham shall yet arise in the midst of the nations, and with one voice proclaim, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” Then shall the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the face of the deep.

Hail happy day—day long foretold—day now beginning to dawn.—Come thou triumphant conqueror, speed thy victorious way, and make this world thy empire.—Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Church of Christ.

STANDING on the ruins of Jerusalem, we would look around, and ask where is the Church of Christ? That guilty city crucified her Lord, put to death her ministers, sent forth the stream of persecution far as her influence could extend; where now is she who was thus visited? The scribes and the pharisees, united with the Roman power in opposition to the peaceable religion of the crucified—where now are her borders, and where now her host?

Near at hand we perceive those believers who were resident in Jerusalem. The descending storm having been suspended for a moment by the Almighty arm of the Redeemer, they, in the interval, escaped. From afar they listened to the noise of destruction, but against them no

armies came. Entering into their chambers, they offered up their prayers, and they remained unhurt.

Scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, we see many, very many, rejoicing in that truth preached by the Lord himself, and assembling together to enjoy the instructions of the laborious disciples, growing in the knowledge of the gospel, and in ripeness for a better world.

Extending our view beyond the land of the incarnation, we see all around, in Egypt, in Greece, in Asia, in Africa, throughout the whole region bowing to Rome, churches rejoicing in Christ. The footsteps of the apostles are visible in every direction, and though in some instances their blood has been shed, that blood has proved the seed of the cause. Many even in Cæsar's household are converted; and Corinth, and Ephesus, and Alexandria, are bringing their offerings to the altar of Immanuel.

Why this distinction? Why, while Jerusalem is a ruin, does the church rear her head?—Because, thus saith the Lord: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

Moreover, it was in the counsels of God that the gospel should be established on the ruins of all former dispensations, and should continue to the dissolution of the world. The Jewish ceremonial was but a forerunner of the fulness of Christ, and, in the nature of things, was designed to pass away. The morning star fades of course before the rising of the sun.

As has been already intimated, the Christians at Jerusalem, taking advantage of a short suspension of hostilities, removed to a place of safety. They went to a village called Pella, beyond the river Jordan. This vil-

lage was inhabited by Gentiles. Their retreat was unmolested. James the Just, their first bishop, having, as we have seen, suffered martyrdom, the apostles and disciples who remained, gathered together along with the kinsmen of our Lord, and chose a successor. The choice fell upon Simeon, the son of Cleopas, who is spoken of in the Gospel of St. Luke, and he became the second bishop of the church of Jerusalem. Under his episcopal care, this body of believers continued during the remainder of the first century. How long they continued at Pella, is uncertain. They appear to have returned to the site of Jerusalem; for when Adrian visited that spot, 47 years after the devastation, he found there a few houses, and a little church of Christians built on Mount Sion. How interesting a scene! Believers in the Lord Jesus occupying the ruins of those habitations in which abode His crucifiers: holding their solemn assemblies, and sending forth their glorious thanksgivings on that holy hill, which was at once the delight of the tribes of the law, and the symbol of the stability of the gospel. How did they look down on the desolations at their feet, and mark the power of their Deliverer.—How did they look abroad on the conversion of the nations, and rejoice in the efficacy of His cross.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Rome.—Domitian.—Family of David.—Persecution.—Clemens.

THE city of Rome appears to have had for its first bishop, Linus, who died in the second year of the Emperor Titus, and was succeeded by Anacletus. To him,

in the reign of Domitian, the brother of Titus, succeeded Clemens, the fellow labourer of Paul, spoken of by that apostle in his epistle to the Philippians. "Domitian, in imitation of his father, made inquiry for such of the Jews as were descended from the royal line of David. His motives were evidently political. Some persons, charged with being related to the royal family, were brought before the emperor. They appear to have been grandsons to Jude, the apostle, cousin to our Lord. Domitian asked whether they were related to the family of David. They acknowledged they were. He then demanded what possessions they enjoyed, and what money they had." They answered that their united possessions amounted to no more than nine thousand pence, and these they had not in money but in land—an estate of 39 acres, from which they paid tribute, and supported themselves by their labour. "He then interrogated them concerning Christ and his kingdom, when and where it would appear. They answered like their Master, when questioned by Pilate, that his kingdom was not of this world, but heavenly: that its glory should appear at the consummation of the world; when he should judge the quick and dead, and reward every man according to his works. Domitian was satisfied that his throne was in no danger from Christian ambition; and the grandsons of Jude had the honour to be dismissed with the same sort of derision with which their Saviour had been dismissed by Herod."

But the successor of Nero did not always permit the Christians thus to escape. Toward the close of his reign, he revived the horrors of persecution. Many were put to death; and among the rest, the consul Flavius Clemens, cousin to the emperor. Domitilla, the wife of

Flavius, who, along with her noble husband, was found guilty of the crime of being a Christian, was banished to the island of Pandataria.

Clemens, the fellow labourer of Paul, gave respectability to the church of Rome. Venerable for years, as well as for piety, his name, as we are informed in scripture, written in the book of life, he was well beloved. Such a man was fitted to live in a period of persecution. And he was useful to others beside the members of his own diocese. An epistle written by him to the church of Corinth is still extant, and is deservedly esteemed as an expression of primitive piety.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Corinth.—Epistle of Clemens.

THE church of Corinth, we know, was blessed with two epistles from an inspired writer. These appear to have been productive of great benefit. But the depravity of human nature manifested itself once more in that church. Pride, and a schismatical spirit, again tarnished the beauty of their Christian profession. On this occasion it was Clemens wrote. Adverting to their late excellent standing, he says, "What stranger that came among you, did not take honourable notice at once of the firmness and fulness of your faith? Who of them did not admire the solemnity and gentleness of your godly spirit in Christ? Who did not extol the liberal practice of your Christian hospitality? How admirable was your sound and mature knowledge of divine things! Ye were

wont to do all things without respect to persons. and ye walked in the ways of God in due subjection to your pastors, and submitting yourselves the younger to the elder. Ye charged young men to attend to the gravity and moderation becoming the Christian character; young women to discharge their duties with a blameless, holy, and chaste conscientiousness, loving their husbands with all suitable tenderness and fidelity, and to guide the house in all soberness and gravity. Then ye all showed an humble spirit, void of boasting and arrogance, more ready to obey than to command, more ready to give than to receive. Content with the Divine allotments, and attending diligently to his word, ye were enlarged in your bowels of love, and his sufferings on the cross were before your eyes. Hence a profound and happy peace was imparted to you all, an unwearied desire of doing good, and a full outpouring of the Holy Ghost was with you. Full of holy counsel, in all readiness of mind, with godly assurance of faith, ye stretched forth your hands to the Lord Almighty, entreating him to be gracious to you, if in any thing ye unwillingly offended. Your care was day and night for all the brethren, that the number of his elect might be saved in mercy and a good conscience. Ye were indeed sincere and harmless, and forgiving one another. All dissention and schism in the church was abominable to you; ye mourned over the fault of your neighbours; their infirmities ye sympathized with as your own; ye were unwearied with all goodness, and ready to every good work. Adorned with a venerable and upright conversation, ye performed all things in his fear, and the law of God was written deep indeed on the tables of your hearts."

Delightful, indeed, is this portrait of a church adorned

with the true charity of the gospel. But how painful the contrast. Clemens thus continues—

“ Thus, when all glory and enlargement were given to you, that scripture was fulfilled, *Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked*. Hence, envy, strife, dissention, persecution, disorder, war, and desolation, have seized your church.—The child has behaved himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable; the mean against the eminent, and the foolish against the wise.—Hence righteousness and peace are far from you, because ye all leave the fear of God, and your spiritual sight is become too dim to be guided by the faith of the gospel. Ye walk not in his ordinances, nor walk worthy of the Lord Christ; but ye all walk too much according to your own evil lusts, nourishing and cherishing a malignant spirit of envy, by which the first death came into the world.”

The sin of schism was in those days viewed with the greatest horror. Clemens entitles the promoters of it “ the haughty, disorderly leaders, of the abominable schism.” It is, indeed, no trifling evil, which men incur by precipitately giving themselves up to the will of those, whose aim is strife, and the advancement of a sect or party, not the interest of godliness.

How much this evil prevails in our day and how little is it deplored. Every handful who feel that their whims are not gratified, or that they cannot rule, rend the body of Christ, and form a new denomination; as if unity were of no value. To use the words of an eminent and pious author,* “ Modern evangelical churches are far gone into the vicious extreme of schism.”

“ To encourage separation from faithful pastors ought

* Milner.

to be the shame, but it is the glory of many. And perhaps an humble spirit will, from Clemens himself, acquire sufficient instruction how to discriminate the spirit of conscientious zeal, from that of schism, and to know when they ought not to separate from the church to which they belong." "The apostles," says he, "with the greatest care ordained the rulers of the church, and delivered a rule of succession, in future, that after their decease, other approved men might succeed. Those men who were ordained by them, or in succession by other choice rulers of the church, with the approbation and concurrence of the whole church, and who, in a blameless conduct have administered to the flock of Christ in humility, who for a series of years have been well reported of by all men, these we think it unrighteous to deprive of the ministry. Nor is it a sin of small magnitude, to eject from the sacred office, men whose ministry hath been thus blameless and holy. Happy those presbyters who have finished their course, departing in peace, and in the faithful discharge of their office. They at least, remote from envy and faction, are not subject to popular caprice, nor exposed to the danger of outliving the affections of their flock, and their own fruitfulness. We see with grief, brethren, that ye have deprived of the ministry some of your godly pastors, whose labours for your souls deserved a different treatment." And he goes on to show, that godly men in scripture, "were persecuted, but by the wicked; were imprisoned, but by the unholy; were stoned, but by the enemies of God; were murdered, but by the profane. Was Daniel cast into the den of lions by men who feared God? Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, cast into the midst of the

burning fiery furnace, by men who worshipped the Most High?"

What the sin of schism is, in what manner the Corinthians were guilty of it, and how far all this is applicable to the case of the churches of the present day, need no comment. He afterwards reminds them of their former guilt, in St. Paul's time. "Do take up the writings of the blessed apostle; what did he say to you in the beginning of the gospel? Truly, by Divine inspiration, he gave you directions concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos; because, even then, ye were splitting into parties. But your party spirit had then less evil in it, because it was exercised towards apostles of eminent holiness, and towards one much approved of by them. But now consider who they are that have subverted you, and broken the bonds of brotherly love. They are shameful things, brethren, very shameful. Oh tell it not on Christian ground, that the ancient and flourishing church of Corinth has fallen out with their pastors, from a weak partiality for one or two persons. This rumour hath not only reached us Christians, but is spread among infidels, so that the name of God is blasphemed through your folly, and your own spiritual health is endangered indeed."

He illustrates the truths he enforces by occasional historical remark.

"Set before your eyes," says he, "the holy apostles. Through envy Peter underwent a variety of affliction, and having suffered martyrdom, went to the due place of glory. Through envy, Paul obtained at length the reward of his patience, having seven times been cast into chains, being scourged, stoned; having preached the gospel in the east and in the west, he obtained a good re-

port through faith, preaching righteousness through the world to the utmost bounds of the west, and suffering martyrdom from princes, he left this world, and reached the shore of a blessed immortality, the most eminent pattern of those who suffer for righteousness' sake. Through the godly conversation and labours of those men, a great multitude of the elect was gathered together, who, through envy were afflicted with cruel torments and obtained a good report through faith among us. Through the same evil principle, even women among us have sustained the most cruel and unrighteous suffering, and finished in patient faith their course, and received, notwithstanding the weakness of their sex, the prize of Christian heroes." After pressing the beautiful example of the charity of Moses, recorded in the book of Exodus, he says, "Who of you has any generosity of sentiment, or bowels of compassion, or fulness of love? Let him say, If the strife and schism be on my account, I will depart, whenever you please: I perform whatever the church shall require. Only let Christ's flock live in peace with their settled pastors. Surely the Lord will smile on such a character."

"The purity of doctrine existing in the church at that day, was abundantly manifest by the following extracts: 'Let us,' says Clement, 'steadfastly behold the blood of Christ, and see how precious it is in the sight of God; which being shed for our salvation, hath procured the grace of repentance for all the world.'"

"Of Lot's wife," he says, "she was made a monument of the Lord's indignation, a pillar of salt to this day, that all the earth in all generations may know, that the double minded, who stagger at the promises of God, and distrust the power of grace in unbelief, shall obtain nothing of the Lord, but the signal display of his vengeance."

“The divine dignity and glory of our Saviour, is well described in these words: ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sceptre of the majesty of God, came not in the pomp of arrogance or pride, though who can understand the thunder of his power? but he was meek and lowly.’

“All these (the Old Testament fathers,) were magnified and honoured, not through themselves, not through their works, not through the righteous deeds they performed, but through his will. And we also by his will being called in Christ Jesus, are justified, not by ourselves, nor by our wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or by the works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by faith, by which the Almighty hath justified all who are or have been justified from the beginning.”

“Of the doctrine of the Spirit’s work on the heart, and the experience of his consolation in the soul, he thus speaks: ‘How blessed, how amazing, the gifts of God, beloved! Life in immortality, splendour in righteousness, truth in liberty, faith in assurance, sobriety in holiness! And thus far in this life we know experimentally. If the earnestness of the Spirit be so precious, what must be the things which God hereafter hath prepared for them that wait for him.’

“What men are by nature, how dark and miserable, what by converting grace in the renewal of the understanding, is thus expressed: ‘Through him, that is Jesus Christ, let us behold the glory of God shining in his face; through him the eyes of our hearts were opened; through him our understanding, dark and foolish as it was, rises again into his marvellous light; through him the Lord would have us to taste of immortal knowledge.’”

CHAPTER XXX.

*Mark.—Church at Alexandria.—Thomas.—Andrew.—Philip.—
Bartholomew.—John.*

THE evangelist St. Mark was sister's son to Barnabas, "the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem. He was probably brought up in Christianity from early life. We are told by Epiphanius that Mark was one of those who were offended at the words of Christ recorded in the 6th chapter of St. John, then forsook him, but was afterwards recovered by means of Peter. After our Lord's ascension, he attended his uncle Barnabas, with Paul, but soon left them and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas, however, hoping the best from one whom he held so dear, proposed him to Paul as their companion, on some future occasion. After the rupture which this occasioned between the two apostles, Barnabas took him with him to Cyprus. Undoubtedly his character improved. Some plants are of slow growth, but attain at length great vigour, and bear much fruit. Even Paul himself, who was so much offended with him, at length declared, He is profitable to me for the ministry. From the epistle to the Colossians, it is evident that he was with the apostle in his imprisonment at Rome. This was in the year 62. His gospel was written by the desire of the believers at Rome, about two years after."

He planted the standard of the cross at Alexandria, in Egypt. Such was the measure of the Spirit imparted through the instrumentality of his preaching, that multitudes were gathered into the fold, and a large and flourishing church established. The influence of his labours extended into the adjoining regions, and the name of

Christ sounded out toward the west. He was succeeded in his bishopric by Anianus; "A man," says Eusebius, the ancient historian, "both virtuous and renowned in all respects." To him succeeded Abilius, who remained bishop thirteen years, and then left his cure to Cerdo.

The Apostle Thomas, we are informed, chose Parthia as his field in which to preach the gospel, and passing on arrived at length at India. Certain it is, the Syrian Christians now resident on the coast of Malabar, derive their origin from him, and cherish, with great affection, his memory.*

It would be highly interesting to us to have the record of all the labours of the apostles, but the Head of the Church has not been pleased to vouchsafe it;—of course we may conclude it is not necessary to our edification. Doubtless, as they drank into the same spirit, they were every where engaged in the same work; and whether the north, the south, the east, or the west, was the scene of their effort, they advanced the same cause. Yes, they every where preached "Christ, even Him crucified;" and they every where saw converts obedient to the faith. Doubtless, moreover, they every where endured persecution; for every where did the same depravity meet them, and every where it was hostile to the truth.

St. Andrew had Scythia and the neighbouring countries allotted to him. At Byzantium, now Constantinople, he ordained Stachys, whom Paul calls his beloved Stachys, bishop of that city. He received the crown of martyrdom at Patræ, a city of Achaia.

The same crown, we are told by ancient story, was awarded to St. Philip, St. Bartholomew, and indeed to the remainder of the apostles generally. They were men

* See Buchanan's Researches: a most interesting work.

who counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Of one of their number we have indeed most interesting facts recorded, and some of these facts in holy scripture. John, the beloved disciple, remained at Jerusalem, until, as is supposed, about the year 50. Shortly previous to that period, the death of the mother of our Lord having taken place, he was released from the interesting charge committed to him on Calvary. The chief scene of his labours was Asia Minor. There he planted several churches.

Of the heavenly temper of this apostle, we know: an anecdote, therefore, which is recorded as having occurred at Ephesus, shows in what manner those who trample under foot the Son of God should be regarded. Going once to bathe, and perceiving that Cerinthus, a man who denied the Divinity of Christ, was in the bath, he came out hastily; "Let us flee," said he, "lest the bath should fall while Cerinthus, an enemy of truth, is within." This story we have on the authority of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was the disciple of St. John. It accords with what the apostle himself wrote under the guidance of inspiration. "If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that bid-deth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds:" as also with the declaration of Paul to the Galatians, "If an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed."—"Indeed the primitive Christians were even more careful to avoid the society of false Christians, than of unbelievers. With the latter they

had at times some free intercourse: with the former they refused even to eat."

CHAPTER XXXI.

John.--His sufferings.--His consolations.--His labours.

JOHN was not permitted to continue his labours of love without molestation. The arch enemy, the prince of the murderers of souls, roused against him the spirit of the heathen, and he was arrested. By order of the Emperor Domitian he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; whence, as we are informed by Tertullian, he came out unhurt. Unsubdued by this miracle, the persecutor banished him to Patmos, a small rocky isle in the Ægean sea. There, though enfeebled by age, he was condemned to labour in the mines, but there the Master met and comforted him.

Doubtless the soul of the apostle was anxious about his Asiatic converts. The breathings of his fervent spirit oft ascended—the supplications of his affectionate heart oft rose before the mercy seat for them: he saw their exposed condition, the ravening lion ready to devour them: he felt the attachment of a father to children whom he loved; and well did he know there was none but the Shepherd of Israel could defend. That Shepherd was not unmindful, though at the right hand of the majesty on high. He was still the high priest of his beloved disciple—still the friend of his suffering fold.—He appeared to John. He poured over the crags of Patmos the light of celestial day. He made the bowels of the mountains more pleasant than the palace of Cæsar; and

he commissioned his disciple to convey to the churches, not merely an ordinary epistle, but instructions bearing his name as Head over all.

John wrote those instructions. After asserting the dignity and the glory of Him who is *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come*:—after declaring the Godhead of Christ, he addressed to the bishops of the seven churches, under the title of angels or messengers, their appropriate letters: and, along with these, he addressed to the whole company of the faithful, a magnificent description of the march of the spiritual Israel, through the various scenes of its pilgrimage, to its everlasting resting place around the throne of God.

This apocalyptic vision was in the year 95. Released by the death of Domitian, the apostle returned from Patmos. “When he had returned to Ephesus,” says the primitive historian,* “being requested, he went unto the countries adjoining, partly to consecrate bishops, partly to set in order whole churches, and partly to chuse by lot, unto the ecclesiastical function, of them whom the Holy Ghost had assigned.”

“At one place in his tour, observing a remarkably handsome young person, he warmly recommended him to the care of a particular pastor. The young man was baptized, and for a time lived as a Christian. But being gradually corrupted by company, he became idle, intemperate, and at length, so dishonest, as to become a captain of a band of robbers. Some time after, John had occasion to inquire of the pastor concerning the young man, who told him, that he was now dead to God, and inhabited a mountain over against his church. John, in

* Eusebius.—Book 3, chapter 20.

the vehemence of his charity, went to the place, and exposed himself to be taken by the robbers. Bring me, says he, to your captain, who beheld him coming. As soon as he knew the apostle, he was struck with shame, and fled. The aged apostle, following him, cried, My son, why flyest thou from thy father, unarmed and old? Fear not, as yet there remaineth hope of salvation. Believe me, Christ hath sent me. Hearing this, the young man stood still, trembled, and wept bitterly. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the society of Christians; nor did he leave him till he found him fully restored by Divine grace."

It was indeed a gracious providence that spared this venerable disciple to the church so long after all his fellow labourers had been gathered home. His authority as a primitive apostle, above all, his having been honoured with the peculiar friendship of Jesus, was calculated to gather around him the strongest attachment of the faithful. Well was he adapted to cheer and to encourage amid the storm of persecution, and, when a Judas arose, to sell once more the Lord of glory, by denying his Divinity, especially was he fitted to confound the apostate. Such a Judas we know did arise, not equal in blasphemy to some of later day, but sufficiently iniquitous to excite a holy indignation.

Against all children of the Pharisees, the apostle wrote his gospel, so fully setting forth the glory of our Lord, and the virtue of his atonement. This he did at the request of the bishops of Asia. The Ebionites, with all other heretics, were much discountenanced so long as the apostle lived. He was an antagonist they could not answer, and they fell into merited contempt.

When this ancient servant of God became unable to

say much in the public assemblies, his constantly repeated sermon, was, "Little children, love one another." He was spared to the advanced age of one hundred, the lovely pattern of every thing excellent.

Is there a young man reads this page?—Go thou, and, by the grace of God, become like him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Gospel Established.

WHAT hath God wrought! is the exclamation which may well escape from all who contemplate the first century of the Christian era. In the beginning of it the world almost wholly lost in darkness—in the end the bright day of the sun of righteousness shining over many nations.—In the beginning of it, the wisdom imparted to Jerusalem overwhelmed by multiplied traditions, and the knowledge reflected on the Gentiles swallowed up in horrible idolatry—in the end, a revelation from God, rich with instruction and radiant with hope, enjoyed by both Jew and Gentile:—the greatest of all moral revolutions effected;—and effected in spite of the opposition of kings and priests and people, united with the prince of the power of air:—a greater good achieved than the academies of Greece ever fancied—a mightier conquest obtained than the armies of Rome ever enterprised. Well may we exclaim, What hath God wrought!

For 4000 years the best helps the most enlightened possessed were types and prophecies. These, though they shadowed forth the expected Deliverer, were no more than heralds:—sufficiently clear, 'tis true, to enable all to

judge aright concerning the character, and repose with confidence upon the power, of the approaching King, but by no means equal to the presence of that King himself. The life and immortality by him brought to view; the mighty consummation by him completed; the fulness of instruction by him dispensed; and, to crown all, the illuminating Spirit by him abundantly poured forth, were calculated to give an elevation to the mind, and an assurance to the heart, before unknown. We behold the race of man entering upon a career of loftier enterprise and brighter expectation, and we may anticipate the period beginning to dawn, when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*—We may look forward to the time when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it.”

The exaltation of the Redeemer at the head of “all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come,” was essential in order to his carrying on the work of regeneration. Though at his ascending on high “he led captivity captive,” and though, by a host of miracles he demonstrated the stability of his truth, still the vile heart of man—“deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”—manifested its disposition to trample under foot the gospel. Without almighty power in the hand of Christ, how could his church have existed? He has, and ever had almighty power, as his enemies in every period have experienced.

The Jews sought to slay Christ. He permitted them to succeed, because “through death he” designed to “destroy him who had the power of death.” Yes, he allowed his body to endure the common lot of the faithful:—but

what became of those Jews? The foundations of their temple were scattered, and they driven as by a tempest to the four winds of heaven—sown among the nations as chaff from the threshing floor.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Enemies of the Cross.—Triumph of Christ.

THE heart being unwilling to humble itself at the foot of the cross, or to receive the pure precepts of the gospel as the rule of life, it is no wonder that imitators of the Jews were found among the Gentiles: it is no wonder that some endeavoured to destroy the truth by secret corruption, and to overwhelm it by heresy. In the days of the Apostle Paul, there were those who “by good words and fair speeches deceived the hearts of the simple:”—there were those who introduced the notion of self-righteousness:—there were those whose “god was their belly, whose glory was in their shame:”—there were schismatics at Corinth who were unwilling to acknowledge the true teachers: the will-worship of antichrist began to manifest itself. Jude and Peter united with their fellow apostle in rebuking these enormities. Corruption, however, was not easily slain. Crushed in one form it assumed another.

The Gnostics, or Docetæ, the progeny of Simon Magus, “held that the Son of God had no proper humanity, and that he died only in appearance on the cross.” These were sufficiently rebuked by Peter in Samaria.

“Cerinthus allowed him a real human nature, but

supposed that Christ, whom yet all the heretics looked on as properly inferior to the supreme God, descending from heaven, united himself to the man Jesus."

"The Ebionites," says Eusebius, the primitive historian, "were poor and abject in delivering the doctrine which concerned Christ; they judged him a simple and a common man. Again, they thought the observation of the law to be necessary, as though salvation were not by faith alone in Christ. Other some of the same name," do not deny "the Lord to have been born of the virgin, and the Holy Ghost.—These heretics do reject the epistles of the Apostle Paul.—The Jewish Sabbath and other Jewish ceremonies they observe alike with the Jews."

These, of course, rejected the atonement: trampled under foot the son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing. As we have seen, these were all put to shame by the Apostle John.

Toward the close of the century, the Gentile converts were considerably corrupted by the Gnostic heresy, and the Jewish by the Ebionite; but, though the flesh thus lusted against the Spirit, such was the power of the exalted Christ, the Spirit prevailed. Through the instrumentality of the last of the apostles, the deniers of the Divinity, and the deniers of the humanity, were, like Simon Magus, and the other false teachers, always accounted heretics. The pagan world worshipped Simon, and false professors rejected Christ; but Christ prevailed.

Yes, Christ prevailed: for when from these "creepers into houses, leading captive silly women,"—when from these spots of darkness we turn to the Christian church, how flourishing does it appear.

We have already beheld it at Rome, at Corinth, at

Alexandria in Egypt, under the pastoral authority of men of God. We have seen the church of Jerusalem, safe, like the bush in the midst of the flame. We have observed it extending to Parthia, and reaching even to India. We have scriptural intimation of its spreading an influence to Ethiopia:—we have reason to believe it obtained an establishment in Spain:—Antioch rejoiced in its beams:—Byzantium acknowledged its power:—the seven churches of Asia were so many lights shining with greater or less brightness. Indeed, from the mines of Cornwall to the banks of the Ganges, we have evidence of the diffusion of the gospel. We know assuredly that it exerted a mighty and a triumphant sway.

The church of Ephesus, as we are informed by the apocalypse, was strong in the faith. It successfully rejected the Nicolaitans, an extremely immoral sect, and, amid evil and good report, continued valiant for the truth. The church of Smyrna was pure in doctrine, and holy in heart and life. Poor in temporal circumstances, its members were rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The church of Pergamus was also pure, though in the midst of heathen corruption. The church in Thyatira was patient and active, and reposed upon Christ, though it had allowed some evil woman boasting of great knowledge to become a teacher, and to draw away members. Sardis and Laodicea had laid aside some portion of their vigilance and prayer; but the church of Philadelphia was humble, charitable, and fervent, cautious of existing heresies, and true to the doctrine of Christ.

These were doubtless in some degree a specimen of the churches throughout the world, and the epistles addressed to their several bishops may with propriety be considered as describing dioceses generally. Error, we

may presume, was every where intermixed, as man is every where imperfect, but every where there was at least a measure, and almost every where a predominance of the pure gold of truth.

Still, however, the darkness of superstition clouded by far the greatest part of the world. All that was done in the first century can only be regarded as the spreading of the morning upon the mountains. Heathenism sat in the seat of temporal authority, and the continuance of its persecutions we are yet to consider.

Second Century.

CHAPTER I.

Importance of Sound Theology.—Nerva.—Trajan.—Pliny.—Persecutions.

WITHOUT a correct view of the truths of the gospel, we shall, as we proceed, meet with many things to surprise us. We shall find men, whom, for many qualities, we are compelled to respect, manifesting the virulence of persecution. We shall see those who are comparatively amiable, around whom literature has thrown its charm, and even a degree of moral virtue has kindled its corruscations, manifesting against the doctrine of Christ the bitterest venom. We shall discover, that, not merely the tyrant whose trade was blood, but the calm philosopher who was apparently meek, broke forth with fierceness to devour the faithful. With the Bible in our hands, and holding fast its principles without gloss or gainsaying, we shall be able to account for this. Yes, we can even account for the self-styled moralist being

the most unrelenting.—The carnal mind that has nourished its enmity by proud speculation, the deceitful heart that has lifted itself into a high opinion of its own righteousness, manifests in every age a peculiar hostility to the cross. “Shall I confess that I am a miserable sinner?” is the language of such. “Shall I go out of myself for righteousness?—Who shall dare to say that I need an atonement?—Thank God I am not as other men!” Like the leper who has persuaded himself he is in health and who finds his good opinion contradicted, the sinner who has become proud of his virtue, and is accosted with the assurance that he is vile, feels hostility. The fabric he has been labouring to erect demolished at a blow—the veil he has carefully woven torn in sunder—the light of truth made to reveal his real deformity—he cherishes a settled hate. In these days his inquiry is, “Cannot the truth be explained away?” In the beginning of the second century, the inquiry was, “Cannot the gospel be rooted out?”

Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, extended his clemency to the Christians. It was during the short interval of tranquillity caused by his reign that the last of the apostles returned to Ephesus, and finished his glorious career in peace. But Nerva reigned only sixteen months.

The next emperor was Trajan, illustrious as a general, the friend of learning, a man of whom an historian says, “he listened with patience, corrected with gentleness, and wished no one to go discontented from his presence.” So unwilling to condemn on suspicion, that he declared, “It is better a thousand criminals should escape, than to have to reproach one’s self with the death of one innocent person.” But this man, so gentle in disposition, medi-

tated no less than the destruction of the Christian name. Among his friends he numbered one who was adorned with all the elegance of learning, whose character was among the most amiable in all pagan antiquity, even Pliny, the governor of Bithynia. The classic scholar united with the "mild" emperor in hate of the faithful. Witness the following letters, written about the year 106.

C. Pliny to Trajan, Emperor, health.

"It is my usual custom, Sir, to refer all things, of which I harbour any doubts, to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its hesitation, or instruct my understanding in its ignorance? I never had the fortune to be present at any examination of Christians, before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loss, to determine what is the usual object either of inquiry or of punishment, and to what length either of them is to be carried. It has also been with me a question very problematical, whether any distinction should be made between the young and the old, the tender and the robust; whether any room should be given for repentance, or the guilt of Christianity once incurred is not to be expiated by the most unequivocal retractation; whether the name itself, abstracted from any flagitiousness of conduct, or the crimes connected with the name, be the object of punishment. In the mean time this has been my method, with respect to those, who were brought before me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians; if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them twice afresh, with a menace of capital punishment. In case of obstinate perseverance, I ordered them to be executed. For of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called

for the vengeance of the magistrate. Some there were infected with the same madness, whom, on account of their privilege of citizenship, I reserved to be sent to Rome, to be referred to your tribunal. In the course of this business, informations pouring in, as is usual when they are encouraged, more cases occurred. An anonymous libel was exhibited, with a catalogue of names of persons, who yet declared, that they were not Christians then, or ever had been, and repeated after me an invocation of the gods and of your image, which for this purpose I had ordered to be brought with the images of the deities, performed sacred rites with wine and frankincense, and execrated Christ, none of which things I am told a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. On this account I dismissed them. Others, named by an informer, first affirmed and then denied the charge of Christianity; declaring that they had been Christians, but had desisted some three years ago, others still longer, some even twenty years ago. All of them worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods, and also execrated Christ. And this was the account which they gave me of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error, that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat among themselves an hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath with an obligation of not committing any wickedness, but on the contrary of abstaining from thefts, robberies, and adulteries, also of not violating their promise, or denying a pledge, after which it was their custom to separate, and to meet again at a promiscuous, harmless meal, from which last they yet desisted, after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeably to your orders, I forbade any

societies. On which account I judged it the more necessary, to inquire by torture from two females, who were said to be deaconesses, what is the real truth. But nothing could I collect, except a depraved and excessive superstition. Deferring therefore any farther investigation, I determined to consult you. For the number of culprits is so great, as to call for serious consultation. For many are informed against of every age and of both sexes, and more still will be in the same situation. For the contagion of the superstition hath spread not only through cities, but even villages and the country. Not that I think it impossible to check and to correct it. The success of my endeavours hitherto forbids such desponding thoughts; for the temples, once almost desolate, begin to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities, which had long been intermitted, are now attended afresh; and the sacrificial victims are now sold every where, which once could scarce find a purchaser. Whence I conclude, that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of impunity on repentance absolutely confirmed."

Trajan to Pliny.

"You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning Christians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down, which will apply itself to all cases. They must not be sought after. If they are brought before you and convicted, let them be capitally punished, yet with this restriction, that if any renounce Christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, he shall obtain pardon for the future, on his repentance. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to; for the precedent would be of the worst

sort, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of my government.”

Who can contemplate without interest this multitude of believers bowing at the feet of Christ, worshipping him as God, receiving grace equal to their day; shining in such beauty of holiness, as to extort the favourable testimony of their persecutors:—more pure, more virtuous, more decided examples of every thing lovely, than the most illustrious or most wise of the heathen. We may be surprised that Pliny did not adopt their cause, and himself become a Christian; but we have already seen the reason. He had no idea of glorifying God: he had no idea of humility of soul:—the proud towerings of his self-righteousness never could brook the blood of a Redeemer.

How degraded is human nature! Its brightest specimens could prefer the worship of an image to the worship of the true God!

CHAPTER II.

Ignatius.—His Sentence.—His Journey.—His Epistles.

IGNATIUS, who, by appointment of the remaining apostles, succeeded Euodius as bishop of the church of Antioch about the year 70, continued in the discharge of his episcopal office almost 40 years: a holy pattern of the virtues and graces of the gospel, wise to win souls, faithful in the discharge of duty, devoted to a better world. He was deeply imbued with the Spirit, and evidently set forth as an example of labour and of suffering:

“A man,” say primitive writings, “a man in all things like to the apostles: as a good governor, by the helm of prayer and fasting, by the constancy of his doctrine and spiritual labour, he exposed himself to the floods of the adversary: he was like a divine lamp, illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his exposition of the holy scriptures: and, lastly, to preserve his church he scrupled not freely to expose himself to a bitter death.”

During the persecutions under the reign of Domitian, he was of singular service to the disciples. After the rage of that period had abated, “he rejoiced greatly at the tranquillity of his church: yet was troubled as to himself, that he had not attained to a true love of Christ, nor was come up to the pitch of a perfect disciple. For he thought that the confession which is made by martyrdom would bring him to a yet more close and intimate union with the Lord.”

In the year 107, Trajan visited Antioch, in his way to the Parthian war. Fearing for the Christians, and hoping to arrest the storm by offering to suffer in their stead, Ignatius came voluntarily into his presence. He was thus addressed by Trajan. “What an impious wretch art thou, both to transgress our commands, and to inveigle other souls into the same folly to their ruin? Ignatius answered, Theophorus ought not to be called so; for wicked spirits are departed from the servants of God. But if you call me impious because of my hostility, I own the charge in that respect. For I dissolve all their snares, sustained inwardly by Christ the heavenly King. Traj. Pray who is Theophorus? Ign. He who has Christ in his breast. Traj. And thinkest thou not that gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies? Ign. You mistake in calling the demons of

the nations by the name of gods. For there is only one God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion. Traj. His kingdom do you say, who was crucified under Pilate? Ign. His, who crucified my sin with its author, and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under their feet, who carry him in their heart. Traj. Dost thou then carry him who was crucified, within thee? Ign. I do; for it is written, 'I will dwell in them and walk in them.' Then Trajan pronounced this sentence against him: 'Since Ignatius confesses, that he carries within himself him that was crucified, we command, that he be carried bound by soldiers to great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts for the entertainment of the people.'"

When he heard his sentence, he exclaimed with joy, "I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee, and hast made me to be put into iron bonds with thy Apostle Paul." "Having said this, he with joy put his bonds about him; and having first prayed for the church, and commended it with tears unto the Lord, he was hurried away" by the soldiers.

"He left Antioch and came to Seleucia, from whence he was to sail. And after a great deal of toil, being come to Smyrna, he left the ship with great gladness, and hastened to see the holy Polycarp, his fellow scholar, who was bishop there; for they had both of them been formerly the disciples of St. John." "The holy joy of their interview may be conceived by those who know what the love of Christ is, and how it operates in the breasts of those in whom he dwells. Deputies were sent from the various churches of Asia to attend and console

him, and to receive some benefit by his spiritual communications. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons conversed with him; a general convocation of the churches seems to have taken place." "To return a recompense to the churches who came to meet him by their governors, he sent,"—say the eye witnesses of these things who have left on record their testimony—"he sent letters of thanks to them, which distilled spiritual grace, with prayer and exhortation."

"Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the worthily happy church in Ephesus of Asia, blessed in the majesty and fulness of God the Father, predestinated before the world to be perpetually permanent in glory, immovable, united, and elect in the genuine suffering,* by the will of the Father, and of Jesus Christ our God, much joy in Jesus Christ and in his spotless grace.'

"I have heard of the name, much beloved in God, which ye have very justly attained by a habit of righteousness, according to the faith and love which is in Christ Jesus our Saviour; how that being followers of God, and stirring up yourselves by the blood of Christ, ye have perfectly accomplished the work which was connatural unto you." "I received therefore, in the name of God, your whole multitude in Onesimus;" he styles him "inexpressible in charity, whom I beseech you to love according to Jesus Christ, and all of you to imitate him. Blessed be his name, who has counted you worthy to enjoy such a bishop." Not improbably this Onesimus was the converted slave concerning whom Paul wrote to Philemon.

"I do not," says he, "dictate to you, as if I were a person of any consequence. For though I am bound

* Alluding doubtless to the errors of the Docetæ.

for the name of Christ, I am not yet perfected in Christ Jesus. For now I begin to be a disciple, and speak to you as my teachers. For I ought to be sustained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long suffering. But since charity will not suffer me to be silent concerning you, for this reason I take upon me to exhort you to run together with me according to the mind of God."

With the utmost care does he recommend unity to them. Amid existing heresies, "what could be so just a preservative to them, as to stick to the society of their faithful pastors, the successors of the apostles? Humility is the guard of real Christian goodness; nothing but the want of it could tempt them to desire a separation. And in every age the same conduct toward godly pastors is doubtless the true wisdom of the church; and the spirit of schism, ambition, and self-conceit, disguising itself under the specious pretences of liberty and of conscience, has produced the most fatal effects. Ignatius certainly would not have wished the Ephesians to follow unsound and unfaithful pastors; but much more caution in judging, and a much greater degree of submission to ministers confessedly upright, are doubtless requisite, than most in our days are willing to admit. 'Let no one mistake; if any man is not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. If the prayer of one or two has so much strength, how much more that of the bishop and the whole church? He who separates from it is proud, and condemns himself. For it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us study therefore obedience to the bishop, that we may be subject to God. And the more silent and gentle any one observes the bishop to be, the more on that account should he reverence him. For every one, to whom the master commits the stewardship, ought

to be received as the master himself.'—'Indeed,' says he, 'Onesimus exceedingly commends your godly order, that you all live according to truth, and that no heresy dwells with you.'—'Some are accustomed to carry about a specious, but fallacious name, whose works are unworthy of God, whom you ought to avoid as wild beasts. For they are raging dogs, biting in secret, whom you should shun, as being persons very difficult to be cured. One physician there is bodily and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten, God appearing in flesh, in immortal true life, both from Mary and from God, first suffering, then impassible.'—'I have known some passing from hence,* whom you did not suffer to sow among you, stopping your ears; so that you would not receive their seed, as being stones of the temple of your Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, lifted up into heavenly places by the engine of Jesus Christ, which is his cross, using the Holy Spirit as a cord.'—'Yet pray also for other men without ceasing; for there is hope of conversion in them, that they also may be brought to God. Give them an opportunity to be instructed at least by your works.'—'Without Christ think nothing becoming, in whom I carry about my bonds, spiritual jewels, in which may I be found at the resurrection through your prayer, that my lot may be cast among the Ephesian Christians, who have always harmonized with the apostles in the power of Jesus Christ.'

“‘Ye are partakers of the mysteries with Paul the holy, the renowned, the blessed, whose footsteps may I follow.’ ‘Frequent assemblies for thanksgiving and prayer. For when you assiduously attend on these things,

* From Smyrna, I suppose, where the heresy of the Docetæ was more common.

the powers of Satan are demolished, and his pernicious kingdom is dissolved by the unanimity of your faith.'—
'Remember me, as Jesus Christ also does you. Pray for the church in Syria, whence I am led bound to Rome, the meanest of the faithful who are there.'

"We see here, what Christians **once** were, and what the doctrines of divine grace are. And that happy union, order, and peace, which flourished so long at Ephesus, untainted with heresy, and ever preserving the simplicity of reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, calls for our commendation of their obedience to their faithful pastors, the want of conscientiousness in which matter, so soon dissipates the spirit of the gospel in many modern churches, and whilst it feeds the pride of corrupt nature, reduces them into contemptible little parties, at variance with one another, and leaves them an easy prey to the crafty and designing."

"Damas, the bishop of Magnesia, appears to have been a young person, whom Ignatius calls 'worthy of God.' Eminent grace in persons of tender years was sometimes in the primitive church distinguished by being raised to the episcopacy. In his letter to the Magnesians he warns them not to despise his youth, but to imitate the holy presbyters, who gave place to him, but not to him so properly, as to the Father of Jesus Christ.—
'Some indeed call a man a bishop, but do every thing independently of him. Such seem to me to have lost a good conscience, because their assemblies are not regulated with steadfastness and Christian order.' He mentions also with honour Bassus and Apollonius as presbyters, and Sotio the deacon, 'whose happiness,' says he, 'may I partake of, because he is subject to the bishop,

as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery, as to the law of Jesus Christ.' ”

In how forcible a manner does he draw the dividing line between the two great classes in the world. “ As there are two coins, one of God, the other of the world, and each of them is impressed with its own character, the unbelievers are of this world, the believers in love have the character of God the Father through Jesus, into whose sufferings if we are unwilling to die, his life is not in us.”

“ Let us hear Ignatius’ testimony to the deity of Christ, and to justification by his grace through faith, and to the constant influences of the Holy Spirit. And we shall see at the same time, how the Jewish leaven of self-righteousness had not ceased to attempt at least to darken and to corrupt these essentials of the gospel. The Jews must have been at this time in a very low state; yet their pharisaism is so congenial to the human mind, that ministers in all ages will see occasion to warn their people against it, as well as Ignatius.

“ Be not deceived with heterodox opinions, nor old, unprofitable fables. For if we still live according to Judaism, we confess that we have not received grace. For the divine prophets lived according to Jesus Christ. For this they were persecuted, being inspired by his grace to assure the disobedient, that there is one God, who manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Eternal Word. If then they have cast off indeed the old state, and are come to a new hope in Christ, let them no longer observe the Jewish Sabbath, but live according to the life of the Lord,* in which also our life rose again by himself and by his death, which some deny,

* *Κυριακὴν ἑωρῆν*—A manifest intimation to them to observe the Lord’s day.

by whom we have received the mystery of believing, and on account of this we endure, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ, our only teacher. How can we live without him, whose disciples even the prophets were, and in spirit expected him as their teacher. Let us not then be insensible of his loving kindness. For if he measured to us according to what we have done, we are ruined. Therefore being his disciples, let us learn to live according to Christianity: for he who follows any other name than this, is not of God. Lay aside then the old, bitter leaven, and be transformed into a new leaven, which is Jesus Christ; for Christianity does not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, that every tongue believing in God might be gathered together. These things I warn you, my beloved, not because I have known some of you thus disposed, but as the least of you I am willing to admonish you, that you fall not into the snares of vain glory, but that you may be well assured of the nativity, suffering, and resurrection, during the government of Pontius Pilate, of which literally and really Jesus Christ was the subject, who is our hope, from which may none of you be turned aside. I know that ye are not puffed up; for ye have Jesus Christ in yourselves, and the more I praise you, the more I know that you are ashamed.' Beautiful view of their genuine humility!

“ ‘ Study then to be confirmed in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles, that in all things which ye do, ye may have good success in flesh and spirit, in faith and love, in the Son, and the Father, and the Spirit; knowing that ye are full of God, I have briefly exhorted you. Remember me in your prayers, that I may come to God, and to the church in Syria, of which I am unworthy to

be called a member. For I need your united prayer in God, and your charity, that the church in Syria may be thought worthy to partake of the dew of heavenly grace through your church. The Ephesians from Smyrna, whence I write, salute you, present before the glory of God, as you also, who in all things have refreshed me, together with Polycarp, bishop of the Smyrneans, and the rest of the churches in the honour of Jesus Christ salute you. Be strong in the concord of God, possessing an inseparable Spirit, which is Jesus Christ.'

"From Smyrna he wrote also to the church of Tralles, the bishop of which was Polybius, 'who so rejoiced with me,' says he, 'that I beheld all your multitude in him. Receiving therefore your divine benevolence through him, I seemed to find you as I have known you to be, followers of God. For since ye are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me to live not after man, but after Jesus Christ who died for us, that, believing in his death, you might escape death.'

"In what follows we have an intimation of the weak and infant state of this church, which, though sound, had probably not been so long planted as the rest. And the martyr seems to express some consciousness of the superior attainments and gifts which he possessed, but checked with deep humility.

"'I have a strong savour of God, but I take a just measure of myself, lest I perish by boasting. For now I must more abundantly fear, and not attend to those who would inflate me with pride; I love indeed to suffer, but do not know whether I am worthy; I need gentleness of spirit, by which the prince of this world is dissolved. Cannot I write to you of heavenly things? But I fear lest I should hurt you, being infants. Excuse me then.

lest, through incapacity of receiving you be suffocated.' He goes on to guard them against schisms and heresies, to remind them of the foundation of the gospel, Christ and him crucified, and in his usual manner to recommend obedience to their pastors; and he modestly thus concludes: 'As yet I am not out of the reach of danger; but the Father is faithful in Jesus Christ, to fulfil my petition and yours, in whom may we be found blameless.'

"The subject of his letter to the Roman Christians was, to intreat them not to use any methods for his deliverance. He had the prize of martyrdom before him, and he was unwilling to be robbed of it. He speaks with uncommon pathos; but take his own words.

"'I fear your charity, lest it should hinder me, for it will be easy for you to do what you please. But it is difficult for me to attain to God if you spare me. If you be silent in my behalf, I shall be made partaker of God; but if you love my flesh, I shall again have my course to run. I write to the churches and signify to them all, that I die willingly for God, unless you prevent. I beseech you, that you show not an unreasonable benevolence toward me. Suffer me to be the food of beasts, by whom I shall attain to God. I am God's wheat and shall be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Rather encourage the beasts, that they may become my sepulchre, that nothing of my body may be left, that I may give no trouble to any one when I fall asleep. From Syria to Rome, I fight with wild beasts, by land and sea, by night and day, chained to ten leopards, who are made even worse by kind treatment. By their injuries I learn the more to be a disciple, yet am I not hereby justified. May I enjoy the wild beasts which are prepared for me; I wish they

may exercise all their fierceness upon me, whom I will encourage, that they may assuredly devour me, and not use me as some, whom they have feared to touch. But if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it. Pardon me, I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple; nor shall any thing move me, of things visible and invisible, that I may enjoy Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil come upon me; be it so, only may I enjoy Jesus Christ. All the ends of the world, and the kingdoms of it will profit me nothing. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ, than to reign over the ends of the earth. Him I seek who died for us; Him I desire who rose again for us. He is my gain laid up for me, suffer me to imitate the passion of my God. If any of you have Him within you, let him conceive what I feel, and sympathize with me, knowing what a conflict I have. The prince of this world wishes to carry me away, and to corrupt my purpose toward God. Let none of you present assist him. My love is crucified, and there is in me no fire that loves water, or *its own extinction*, but living and speaking in me, it says, Come to the Father. I have no delight in the bread that perisheth, nor in the pleasures of this life; I long for the bread of God, the flesh of Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, and I desire to drink his blood, incorruptible love.'

“Certainly no words can express in a stronger manner the intenseness of spiritual desire, and one may look down with contempt and pity on all the magnanimity of secular heroes and patriots, as compared with it. Yet I have some doubt, whether all this flame, strong and sin-

cere as it unquestionably was, had not something mixed with it by no means of so pure a kind. For I mean not to carry the reader's admiration or my own beyond the limits of human imbecility. Ought not the Roman Christians to endeavour to save Ignatius' life by all honest means? Has any man a right to hinder others from attempting to save his life? Or will his intreaties give them a right to be as indifferent for his preservation as he himself is? Ought not every man however prepared for death, and preferring it, if God please, to use all possible methods, consistent with a good conscience, to preserve his life?

"I cannot answer these queries to the advantage of Ignatius' determination. Was not his desire of martyrdom excessive? If he was wrong, it was doubtless a mistake of his judgment. I fear the example of Ignatius did harm in this respect in the church. Martyrdom was, we know, made too much of in the third century; so hard is it to be kept from all extremes; ours are generally of the opposite kind."

CHAPTER III.

Martyrdom of Ignatius.

THE season for the public spectacles at Rome advancing, he was urged by his keepers to depart. Setting sail from Smyrna he arrived at Troas, where he was cheered by the intelligence that the persecution of the church at Antioch had ceased. Having been accompanied to Troas by Burrhus, the deacon of Polycarp, he despatched him with an epistle to the Philadelphians, in

return for a visit made to him at Troas by their bishop. He wrote also two other epistles, several of the churches having sent their messengers to Troas also, to visit and salute him.

To the Philadelphians he recommends as usual, "unity, concord, and obedience."

"One may form some idea of the manner in which these primitive Christians enjoyed the grace of God, and admired and loved it, as it appeared in one another, by his way of speaking of the Philadelphian bishop, whose name is not given to us, 'whom,' says he, 'I know not from himself, nor by men to have obtained the ministry for the common good of saints, nor through vain glory, but in the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am perfectly charmed with his meekness; when silent, he exhibits more power than vain speakers.' He recommends to them to preserve an unity in the administration of the Lord's Supper. 'For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of his blood, one altar, as also one bishop, with the presbytery and deacons my fellow servants, that ye may do whatever ye do according to the will of God.'

"The firmness of Christian faith, and his zeal against the spirit of self-righteousness, are observable in the following passage. 'If any interpret Judaism to you, hear him not. For it is better to hear the gospel from a circumcised person, than Judaism from an uncircumcised one. But if both speak not of Jesus Christ, they are to me pillars and sepulchres of the dead, on which are written only the names of men.'

"Having spoken of the ancients, he says, 'the ancient things to me are Jesus Christ, the ancient things inaccessible to man, his cross, and death, and resurrection, and

faith which is in him, in which I desire (through your prayer) to be justified.' He begs them to send a deacon to Antioch, to congratulate his people on the cessation of persecution. Toward the conclusion he speaks of Philo, the deacon from Cilicia, who ministered to him, together with Agathopes, a choice saint, who, renouncing the world, had followed him from Syria.

"He wrote also from Troas to the Smyrneans, and his commendations of them are consonant to the character they bear in the book of the Revelation. They had weathered the storm of persecution, which was there prophesied of, fulfilled, I apprehend, under Domitian, and had probably enjoyed the ministry of Polycarp from St. John's time. The most striking thing in this epistle, is the zeal with which he warns them against the Docetæ. In what lay the evil of their heresy? It took away the atoning blood of Christ, and the hope of a blessed resurrection. In what lies the real glory of Christian religion in his view, is not hard to understand; and it is worth while for modern divines to learn from him. 'I glorify Jesus Christ our God, who hath given you wisdom. For I understand, that you are perfect in the immovable faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *really* was of the seed of David according to the flesh; born of the virgin *really*, who *really* suffered under Pontius Pilate. For all these things he suffered for us, that we might be saved. And he *truly* suffered, as also he *truly* raised up himself, not as some infidels say that he *seemed* to suffer, themselves only *seeming* to be, and as they think, it shall happen to them. I forewarn you of those beasts, who are in the shape of men, whom you ought not only not to receive, but if possible not even to meet with.' An humble and thankful sense of the unspeakable value of Christ, leads

naturally to this charity, and the want of it leaves men always under the appearance of candour to a cruel insensibility of heart, and an undistinguishing scepticism. 'Only you ought to pray for them, if they may be converted, which is a difficult case. But Jesus Christ, our true life, has the power of this.' It seems that these heretics with their usual artifices laboured to work themselves into the good graces of Ignatius. He sees through their designs, and says, 'for what does it profit me, if any man commend me, and yet blaspheme my Lord, denying him to have come in the flesh?' They separate from the eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins. They who contradict the gift of God, die in their reasonings.' Union with the bishop he strenuously insists on. 'It is not lawful without the bishop, to baptize, or to make an *αγάπη* (love feast).'

"We see the method of true Christians in these times. They carefully separated from heretics; they beheld their views with horror; they stuck close to Christ. His godhead, manhood, atonement, priesthood were inestimably precious in their eyes. They could not allow those to be Christians at all, who denied the fundamentals. In fine they preserved order and close connexion with their pastors; they did nothing in religion without them. These were the means of preserving truth among them. And the long course of evangelical prosperity in these churches, under God, may be ascribed to them.

"One letter only remains to be mentioned, that to Polycarp. In the advice which he gives to him, we may see a just picture of pastoral integrity, wisdom, and charity. The whole of it deserves to be studied by all

ministers. The more holy any pastor is, the more will he be sensible of the need of a wisdom and strength more than human. The disadvantages in which a poor sinful worm is involved, who has to contend against the united powers of the world and the devil, amidst the corrupt workings of his own nature, the open opposition of the profane, and the faults of God's own people, cannot even be conceived by a mere secular clergy, intent only on ease, preferment, or at best on literary indulgences and external decorum; as little will they be conceived by those ambitious and turbulent teachers, who are so swallowed up in political dreams, as to forget that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

“‘I exhort thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to apply thyself to thy course, and to exhort all, that they may be saved. Do justice to thy station in all diligence both temporal and spiritual. Be studious of that best of blessings, unity. Bear with all, as also the Lord doth with thee. Bear with all in charity, as thou also dost. Find time for prayer without ceasing. Ask for more understanding than thou hast at present. Watch, possessing a spirit ever attentive. Speak to each separately, according to the help of God. Bear with the diseases of all, as a perfect combatant. The more labour the more reward. If thou love only the obedient disciples, thou evidencest no grace. Rather bring into orderly subjecting the turbulent in meekness. Every wound is not cured by the same method of application. Watch as a divine wrestler, thy theme is immortality and eternal life. Let not those who seem experienced Christians, and are yet unsound in the faith, stagger thee. Stand firm as an anvil continually struck. It is the character of a great wrestler to be mangled and yet to conquer.

Be more studious than thou art. Consider the times, and expect him who is above all time, who is unconnected with time, the invisible One made visible for us,—the impassable but passable for us; who bore all sorts of sufferings for us. Let not widows be neglected. Next to the Lord do thou take care of them. Let nothing be done without thy cognizance. Do thou nothing without the mind of God. Let assemblies be more frequently held. Seek out all by name. Despise not slaves of either sex; yet let them not be puffed up, but serve more faithfully to the glory of God, that they may obtain a better liberty from God. Let them not desire to be set at liberty at the charge of the church, lest they be found slaves of lust. If any can remain in chastity for the honour of the Lord, let them do so without boasting. If they boast, they are lost; and if the man set himself up above the bishop, he is lost. It behoves the married to enter into that connexion with the consent of the bishop, that their marriage may be after the will of God, and not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.’

“From Troas Ignatius being brought to Neapolis passed by Philippi through Macedonia, and that part of Epirus, which is next to Epidamnus. Having found a ship in one of the sea-ports, his conductors sailed over the Adriatic, and from thence entering into the Tuscan sea, and passing by several islands and cities, at length they came in view of Puteoli, which being shown to him, he hastened to go forth, desirous to tread in the steps of the apostle Paul; but a violent wind arising, would not permit him to accomplish this design. The wind continuing favourable in one day and night, ‘we indeed’ (say the relaters of the martyrdom, his attendants) ‘were unwillingly hurried on, as sorrowing to think of being sepa-

rated from the martyr. But to him it happened according to his wish, that he might sooner leave the world, and depart to his Lord whom he loved. Wherefore sailing into the Roman port, and those impure sports being at an end, the soldiers began to be offended with his slowness, but the bishop joyfully complied with their hastiness.* The port was at Ostia, some miles from Rome, and here he was met by the Roman Christians, who intimated their strong desire for his preservation. Some of them probably had some influence, and were willing to try it. Ignatius however was inflexible. He was now brought to Rome and presented to the prefect of the city.

“When he was led to execution he was attended by a number of the brethren, and was allowed to join in prayer with them. And he prayed to the Son of God* in behalf of the churches, that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the brethren toward each other. He was then led into the amphitheatre, and speedily thrown to the wild beasts. He had here also his wish. The beasts were his grave. A few bones only were left, which the deacons gathered, carefully preserved, and afterwards buried at Antioch.

“The writers thus conclude. ‘We have made known to you both the day and the time, that being assembled together according to the time of his martyrdom, we may communicate with the magnanimous martyr of Christ, who trode under foot the devil, and completed the course which he had devoutly wished in Christ Jesus our Lord, by whom and with whom all glory and power be to the Father with the blessed Spirit for ever. Amen.’ ”

* I use the expression of the Acts: let the reader make the obvious inference for himself.

Immediately after the death of Ignatius, his epistles were collected by Polycarp, and sent to the church at Philippi. Eusebius, Jerome, Photius, and all the most eminent writers of the primitive days, inform us of this. Irenæus speaks of the letter of Polycarp which accompanied the epistles, as "extremely accurate and very proper to show the character of the faith, and the doctrine of the truth, to those that take any care of their salvation." He also quotes from the epistles themselves, as does Origen. Eusebius recites to us large portions of them. Athanasius and Chrysostom refer to them also. Indeed we have every evidence of which the subject is capable, that these seven epistles are perfectly genuine. There are some larger epistles, which cannot be relied upon; but these seven have been submitted to the test of the severest scrutiny, and must be received, unless we would reject the whole current of the ancient historians. That eminent man of God, Usher, has bestowed the most careful attention on the inquiry, and demonstrated the matter beyond a doubt; and, along with Usher, many others. We may then rejoice in this legacy of a primitive martyr, as a true portrait of the piety of the days immediately succeeding the apostles. May there be many like Ignatius in holiness of heart and life!

CHAPTER V.

Epistle of Polycarp.

IGNATIUS having been at Philippi, after his departure from Smyrna, Polycarp wrote an epistle to the Philippians, desiring to know all the circumstances they could

relate concerning him; every thing that transpired in the tour of martyrdom being esteemed interesting. In this epistle he reiterates the sentiments of his brother of Antioch—sentiments which they both learned from the inspired apostle, their teacher. “I rejoiced greatly with you,” says he, “in our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye received the images of a true love, and accompanied, as it behooved you, those who were in bonds becoming saints; which are the crowns of such as are truly chosen by God and our Lord: as also that the root of the faith which was preached from ancient times remains firm in you to this day; and brings forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ; who suffered himself to be brought even to the death for our sins.” Quoting from the sacred scriptures, he dwells upon the glory of Christ, at the right hand of God exalted, and exhorts the Philippians to walk in his fear. He also directs their attention to the epistle written to them by “the blessed and renowned Paul.” To the deacons he sends the word of exhortation: the elders he counsels to rule well; and all he entreats to be faithful. “Whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” says he, “is Antichrist; and whoever does not confess his suffering upon the cross, is from the devil. And whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there shall neither be any resurrection, nor judgment, he is the first born of Satan.”

Valens, one of their presbyters, having fallen through covetousness, he sounds in the ears of all the rest the voice of warning.

Christ, the “everlasting High Priest,” is the theme to which he repeatedly adverts, and all his entreaties to holiness are connected with looking to him.

“The epistles of Ignatius which he wrote unto us, to-

gether with what others of his have come to our hands, we have sent to you according to your order; which are subjoined to this epistle; by which you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus."

It is evident that all true Christians will unite in that song of eternity, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," for it is a song in which they all delight upon earth.

CHAPTER VI.

Martyrdom of Simeon.—Persecution.—Rome.—Antioch.

SIMEON, as we have already mentioned, succeeded James, the brother of our Lord, as bishop of Jerusalem. The city itself was no more, but the church survived, flourishing like a garden in the midst of desolation. Simeon was now venerable for age as well as for piety, being an hundred and twenty years old. But nothing could appease the enemies of the cross. Some heretics accused him before Atticus, the Roman governor—accused him of being a Christian, and a descendant of David. He was scourged with great severity, insomuch that all were astonished at his ability to endure, as well as at the firmness with which he suffered. Atticus was moved at the sight of his torments, but he ordered him to be crucified. Thus departed to his rest the son of Cleopas. He was succeeded in his bishopric by Justus.

In Asia, Arrius Antoninus persecuted with extreme fury. The whole body of Christians, wearied with constant hardships, presented themselves before his tribunal,

not improbably hoping to disarm him by the sight of their numbers. He ordered a few to execution, and said to the rest, "Miserable people, if you choose death, you may find precipices and halters enough." How easy would it have been for the Christians to have risen in powerful rebellion; but they remembered the meekness of their Master, and obeyed his precepts.

Clemens, of Rome, dying, after having preached the word and governed his diocese nine years, Euarestus became bishop in his stead. After the death of Euarestus, Alexander succeeded.

In the bishopric of Antioch, Herod succeeded. Priscus was made the fourth bishop of Alexandria. About the same time flourished Papias, bishop of Hierapolis; a man, says Eusebius "passing eloquent and expert in the scriptures." He wrote five books, entitled "The Exposition of the Lord's Sermons."

CHAPTER VII.

Death of Trajan.—Adrian.—Quadratus.—Aristides.

TRAJAN, the persecutor of the church, after carrying on for some time his wars in the East, at length, in the year 117, departed to the presence of that King of all monarchs, who pronounces with equal justice upon an emperor and a slave. His armies, his provinces, and his royal array, did not keep him from the grave, or prevent his appearance before a righteous tribunal. Of his future estate we say nothing, but let the living remember how foolish is opposition to God.

The successor in government, "Adrian, appears not to have ever issued any persecuting edicts. But the iniquity of his predecessor survived, and Adrian's silent acquiescence for a time, gave it sufficient scope to exert itself in acts of barbarity.

"In the mean time the gospel spread more and more. A number of apostolical persons demonstrated by their conduct, that the Spirit, which had influenced the apostles, rested upon them. Filled with divine charity, they distributed their substance to the poor, and travelled into regions, which as yet had not heard the sound of the gospel; and having planted the faith, they ordained other persons as pastors, committing to them the culture of the new ground, and passed themselves to other countries. Hence numbers through grace embraced the doctrine of salvation, at the first hearing, with much alacrity.* It is natural to admire here the power of grace in the production of so pure and charitable a spirit, to contrast it with the illiberal selfishness so prevalent even among the best in our days, and to regret how little is done for the propagation of the gospel through the world, by nations whose aids of commerce and navigation are so much superior to those enjoyed by the ancients. One advantage these Christians possessed indeed, which we have not. They were all one body, one church, of one name, and cordially loved one another as brethren. The attention to fundamentals, to real Christianity, was not dissipated by schismatic peculiarities, nor was the body of Christ rent in pieces by factions. There were indeed many heretics; but real Christians admitted them not into their communities; the line of distinction was drawn with suf-

* Euseb. b. 3. ch. 33.

ficient precision, and a dislike of the person or offices of Christ, and of the real spirit of holiness, discriminated the heretics: and separation from them, while it was undoubtedly the best mark of charity to their souls, tended to preserve the faith and love of true Christians in genuine purity.

“Among these holy men Quadratus was much distinguished. He succeeded Publius in the bishopric of Athens, who had suffered martyrdom either in this or the foregoing reign. He found the flock in a dispersed and confused state,* their public assemblies were deserted, their zeal was grown cold and languid, their lives and manners were corrupted, and they seemed likely to apostatize from Christianity. Quadratus laboured to recover them with much zeal and with equal success.† Order and discipline were restored, and with them the holy flame of godliness. One of the strongest testimonies of these things, is the account which the famous Origen, (who lived some years after) in the second book of his treatise against Celsus, gives of the Athenian church. While this great man is demonstrating the admirable efficacy of Christian faith on the minds of men, he exemplifies his positions by this very church of Athens, on account of its good order, constancy, meekness, and quietness, infinitely superior to the common political assembly at Athens, which was factious and tumultuary, and no way to be compared with the Christian church in that city: he affirms that it was evident, that the worst parts of the church were better than the best of their popular assemblies. This is a very pleasing testimony to the growth of Christianity, since the time that a handful of seed was sown there by St. Paul; and let the testimony of so pene-

* Euseb. b. 4. ch. 22.

† Cave's Life of Quadratus.

trating and sagacious an observer as Origen be considered, as one of the many proofs that might be given of the happy effect which real Christianity has on human society. To a mind not intoxicated with vain ideas of secular glory, the Christian part of Athens must appear infinitely more happy and more respectable, than that commonwealth ever had been in the meridian of its glory. But we hope in future pages to give much stronger proofs of the advantages derived to society from the gospel.

“In the sixth year of his reign, Adrian came to Athens, and was initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries. This prince was remarkably fond of Pagan institutions, and by this very circumstance demonstrated a spirit extremely foreign to Christianity. The persecutors proceeded with sanguinary vigour; when Quadratus at length presented an apology to the emperor, defending the gospel from the calumnies of its enemies; in which he particularly took notice of our Saviour’s miracles, his curing diseases, and raising the dead, some instances of which, he says, were alive in his time.

“Aristides, a Christian writer at that time in Athens, addressed himself also to Adrian in an apology on the same subject. The good sense of the emperor at length was roused to do justice to his innocent subjects. The apologies of the two writers may be reasonably supposed to have had some effect on his mind. Yet a letter from Serenius Granianus, proconsul of Asia, may be conceived to have moved him still more. He wrote to the emperor, that it seemed to him unreasonable, that the Christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without any crime proved against them. This seems the first instance of any Roman governor daring publicly to throw out ideas

contradictory to Trajan's iniquitous maxims, which inflicted death on Christians as such, abstracted from any moral guilt. And it seems to me a sufficient proof, that the severe sufferings of Christians at this period, which appear to have been very remarkable in Asia, were more owing to the active and sanguinary spirit of persecution itself, which, from Trajan's example, was become very fashionable, than to any explicit regard for his edicts. We have Adrian's rescript addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Granianus, whose government seems to have been nearly expired when he wrote to the emperor.

To Minucius Fundanus.

“ ‘I have received a letter written to me by the very illustrious Serenius Granianus, whom you have succeeded. To me then the affair seems by no means fit to be slightly passed over, that men may not be disturbed without cause, and that sycophants may not be encouraged in their odious practices. If the people of the province will appear publicly, and make open charges against the Christians, so as to give them an opportunity of answering for themselves, let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude demands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any will accuse them, that you should take cognizance of these matters. If any then accuse, and show that they commit any thing against the laws, do you determine according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules,* if the charge be a mere calumny, do you estimate the enormity of the offence, and punish it as it deserves.’ ”

* This is an oath, demonstrating only the earnestness of the writer in his declarations, according to the usual profaneness of men.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mildness of Adrian.—The Jews.—Ælia.—Heresies.

“It does not appear that Adrian meant the conduct of his predecessor to be the model of his own, and we shall see in the next reign still clearer proofs of the equity of Adrian’s views. It is but a piece of justice due to this emperor, to free his character from the charge of persecution, and Christians of that or any age could not object to the propriety of punishing them equally with other men, if they violated the laws of the state. But it is the glory of the times we are now reviewing, that no men were more innocent, peaceable, and well-disposed citizens than they. Yet the enmity of men’s minds against real godliness, so natural in all ages, laid them under extreme disadvantages unknown to others, in vindicating themselves from unjust aspersions; and this forms indeed one of the most painful crosses which good men must endure in this life. One of these disadvantages was, the many heretics who, wearing the name of Christians, were guilty of the most detestable enormities. These were indiscriminately charged by the Pagans on Christians in general. This circumstance, in addition to other still more important reasons, rendered them careful in preserving the line of separation distinct; and by the excellency of their doctrine, and the purity of their lives, they were enabled gradually to overcome all uncandid insinuations.

“There is extant also a letter of Adrian,* in which he speaks of the Christians as very numerous at Alexandria.

* Vopiscus, b. 2. 67.

and of Christian bishops, in a manner, as considerable as the priests of Serapis. Since St. Mark's time, it is evident, though we have scarce any particular accounts, that the gospel must have flourished abundantly in Egypt.

“But the same equitable rule of government, which forbade Adrian to punish the Christians, led him to be very severe against the Jews; for now appeared Barchochebas, who pretended to be the star prophesied of by Balaam. This miserable people, who had rejected the true Christ, received the imposter with open arms; who led them into horrid crimes, and amongst the rest into a cruel treatment of the Christians.* The issue of the rebellion was the entire exclusion of the Jews from the city and territory of Jerusalem. Another city was erected in its stead, and called after the emperor's name, *Ælia*. This leads us to consider how the state of the mother-church of Jerusalem was affected by this great revolution. The Christian Jews previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as it has been observed, had retired to Pella, a little town beyond Jordan, inhabited by Gentiles. The unexpected retreat of Cestius had given them this opportunity of effecting their escape. How long they continued here, is uncertain. They must however have returned before Adrian's time, who, coming to Jerusalem forty-seven years after the devastation, found there a few houses and a little church of Christians built on Mount Sion. Here the church of Jerusalem kept their solemn assemblies, and seemed to have acquired a splendid accession by the conversion of Aquila, the emperor's kinsman, whom he made governor and overseer of the new

* Justin Martyr, in his first (commonly called second Apology) observes that Barchochebas cruelly tortured the Christians, who refused to deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ.

city. But still pursuing his magic and astrological studies, he was cast out of the church. Strong proof that the mother-church still retained a measure of its pristine purity and discipline. Corrupt churches are glad to retain persons of eminence in their communion, however void of the spirit of the gospel. Aquila, incensed, apostatized to Judaism, and translated the Old Testament into Greek.*

“Eusebius, b. 4. ch. 5. gives us a list of the bishops who successively presided in Jerusalem. The first was the apostle James, the second Simeon, both whose stories have been recorded. He mentions thirteen more, but we have no account of their characters and actions. During all this time something Judaical seems to have continued in their practice; though Jewish ideas would naturally decay by degrees. The revolution under Adrian, at length put a total end to the Jewish church, by the extirpation and banishment of this people. To such outward changes is the church of Christ subject; a new church however arose in Ælia, of the Gentiles, whose first bishop was Mark.”

In the third year of the reign of Adrian, Alexander bishop of Rome dying, after governing his church ten years, Xystus was chosen in his stead: “and about that time,” continues Eusebius, “Primus, bishop of Alexandria, when he had preached there twelve years died; after whom Justus succeeded.

“In the twelfth year of the reign of Adrian, after Xystus had been bishop of Rome ten years, Telesphorus succeeded him, being the seventh from the apostles. After a year and a few months Eumenes was chosen bishop of Alexandria, the sixth by succession.”

* Cave's Life of Simeon.

We have said there were heresies. The enemy of the cross is not without numerous efforts. He roused the carnal hearts of the heathen to those persecutions in which he delighted, and when, as in the case of Adrian, an emperor ruled who was disposed to relax the severity of torment, he changed his ground. Then he encouraged his servants to pretend they were Christians, and under the holy garb to circulate error. We are told of Menander, of Saturninus, of Basilides, men who need scarcely be named, were it not that their speedy overthrow, and rapid approach to contempt illustrate the omnipotence of the gospel. Carpocrates, also, has left his name in the catalogue of those, who, for a little time, endeavoured to intercept the rays of the sun of righteousness. He clung to the heresy of the Gnostics, descended from Simon Magus. These various opposers gave occasion to the true followers of Christ to write, and publish their views of doctrine, and thus became instruments of furnishing us with valuable expressions of the piety and the talent of primitive days. Agrippa Castor was one of these. He exposed the "satanical juggling" of Basilides. This term, borrowed from Eusebius, describes the conduct of many of the heretics, so that they generally confuted themselves.

It was a mercy, for which believers were no doubt grateful, that the successor of Trajan was disposed to compassion. They knew the value of repose, and that interval which allowed them to worship without danger of death was a rich privilege. They redoubled their efforts to spread the knowledge of the truth, and "an innumerable multitude of men embraced, yea at the first hearing, with prompt and willing minds, the religion of the almighty God."

CHAPTER IX.

Antoninus Pius.—Justin Martyr.—His Apology.

“ADRIAN, after a reign of twenty-one years, was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, who appears to have been, at least in his own personal character and intentions, always guiltless of Christian blood. It was very difficult for the enemies of Christ to support their persecuting spirit, with any tolerable specious pretensions. The abominations of heretics, whom ignorance and malice will ever confound with real Christians, furnished them with some. Probably these were much exaggerated; but whatever they were, the whole Christian name was accused of them. Incest and the devouring of infants were charged upon them, and thus a handle was afforded for the barbarous treatment of the best of mankind; till time detected the slanders, and men became at length ashamed of affecting to believe, what was in its own nature improbable, and was supported by no evidence. It pleased God at this time to endow some Christians with the power of defending his truth by the manly arms of rational argumentation.”

The most distinguished among these was Justin Martyr. “This great man was born at Neapolis in Samaria, anciently called Sichem. His father was a Gentile, probably one of the Greeks, belonging to the colony transplanted thither, who gave his son a philosophical education. In his youth he travelled for the improvement of his understanding, and Alexandria afforded him all the entertainment which an inquisitive mind could derive from the fashionable studies.—The Stoics appeared to

him at first the masters of happiness. He gave himself up to one of this sect, till he found he could learn nothing from him of the nature of God. It is remarkable (as he tells us himself*) that his tutor told him this was a knowledge by no means necessary; which much illustrates the views of Dr. Warburton concerning these ancient philosophers, that they were atheists in reality. He next betook himself to a peripatetic, whose anxious desire of settling the price of his instructions convinced Justin, that truth did not dwell with him. A pythagorean next engaged his attention, who requiring of him the previous knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry, dismissed him for the present, when he understood he was unfurnished with those studies. In much solicitude he applied himself to a platonic philosopher, with a more plausible appearance of success than from any of the foregoing. He now gave himself to retirement. As he was walking near the sea, he was met by an aged person of a venerable appearance, whom he beheld with much attention. Do you know me? says he; when Justin answered in the negative, he asked him why he surveyed him with such attention? I wondered, says he, to find any person here. The stranger observed that he was waiting for some domestics, but what brought you here, says he? Justin professed his love of private meditation; the other hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation abstracted from practice, which gave occasion to Justin to express his ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger by degrees endeavoured to cure him of his ignorant admiration of Plato and Pythagoras, and to point

* His dialogue with Trypho, whence the account of his conversion is extracted.

out to him the writings of the Hebrew prophets as being much more ancient than any of those called philosophers, and led him to some view of Christianity, in its nature and in its evidences, adding, ‘above all things, pray that the gates of light may be opened to thee; for they are not discernible, nor to be understood by all, except God and his Christ give to a man to understand.’ The man having spoken these things and much more left me, says Justin, directing me to pursue these things, and I saw him no more. Immediately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets and those men who are the friends of Christ, and weighing within myself his words, I found this to be the only sure philosophy. We have no more particulars of the exercises of his soul in religion. His conversion took place from hence some time in the reign of Adrian. But he has shown us enough to make it evident, that conversion was then looked on as an inward spiritual work on the soul, and that he had the substance of the same work of grace which the Spirit operates at this day on real Christians. There appears in his case an earnest thoughtfulness, attended with a strong desire to know God, and an experimental sense of his own ignorance, and of the insufficiency of human resources. Then the providential care of God in bringing him under the means of Christian instruction, a direction to his soul to pray for spiritual illumination, the divine hunger created in his heart, and in due time the satisfactory comforts and privileges of real Christianity; which with him was not mere words and declarations, but he found it, he says, to have a formidable majesty in its nature, adapted to terrify those who are in the way of transgression, as well as a sweetness, peace, and serenity for those who are conversant in it.

He owns in another of his works,* that the example of Christians suffering death so serenely for their faith, moved his mind not a little; this is an obvious consideration and need not to be insisted on; it is not for the interest of the cause of those called philosophers in any age, that it should be insisted on. Justin after his conversion still wore the usual philosophic garb, which demonstrates that he retained, perhaps, too great an affection for the studies of his youth;† and if I mistake not, he always preserved a very strong tincture of the philosophic spirit, though not in such a manner as to prevent his sincere attachment to the gospel.

“Coming to Rome in the time of Antoninus Pius, he there wrote a confutation of the heretics; particularly of Marcion, the son of a bishop born in Pontus, who for lewdness‡ was ejected from the church and fled to Rome, where he broached errors of an Antinomian tendency. It makes no part of my plan to define the systems of heretics, but only to speak of them as they come in my way, with a special reference to their opposition to the fundamentals of the gospel. That holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, and which was the great design of Christ to promote, found in this pretended Christian a cordial enemy; and Justin, who had tasted of the holy nature of the gospel in his own experience, withstood him both in conversation and by his writings. About the year 140, he published his excellent Apology for the Christians, addressed to Antoninus Pius, which may be reasonably supposed to have had a considerable

* Apology Second, though misnamed the First, in all the copies of Justin.

† Cave's Life of Justin.

‡ The truth of this charge against his morals has been disputed, possibly with justice.

influence on the political conduct of that prudent emperor, with respect to the Christians.

“It appears from this performance, that it was common to accuse Christians merely as such, and to charge the faults of any who bore the name on the whole body. Thus there is no new thing under the sun. The term Christian was matter of obloquy at that time, as several modern terms have been since. And it requires no great degree of rational powers to show, as Justin has done completely, the absurdity and inconclusiveness of such objections, whether ancient or modern. He takes notice also of the happy effects which the conduct of Christians had then on mankind. ‘Many instances among us,’ he observes, ‘we have to show of powerful changes among men, of men being impressed by the sobriety and temperance of their neighbours, in favour of the gospel, or by observing the unexampled meekness of fellow travelers under cruel treatment, or the uncommon integrity and equity of those with whom they transacted business.’ We see hence fresh proofs of the continuance of vital religion in the time of Justin: a man calling himself a Christian, without any practical power of the religion, would scarce have then been classed among the brethren. I find also fresh proofs, in this Apology, of the strong line of distinction then kept up between Christians and heretics. He observes that the latter were fond of the name, and yet were not persecuted. There was nothing in their spirit and conduct that provoked persecution. He takes notice also of the small number of Jewish converts in comparison of the main body of the nation. But this he observes was agreeable to the prophecies of the Old Testament.”

Speaking of the idolatries of the day he says, “with

respect to the gods in worship among you, we are Atheists, but far otherwise in respect of the most true God, the father of righteousness, purity, and every virtue, a God infinitely removed from the least mixture or spot of evil; him and his only begotten Son, (who has instructed us in what I just now mentioned concerning these evil spirits, and likewise acquainted us with another host of good and godlike ministering spirits) both these, I say, together with the Spirit, who spake by the prophets, we worship and adore, and our way of worshipping is in spirit and truth; and as we have been taught, so are we ready to communicate the same freely, to every one that is willing to learn."

"'Tis in our power," says he, "at any time to escape your torments, by denying the faith when you question us about it; but we scorn to purchase life at the expense of a lie; for our souls are winged with a desire of a life of eternal duration and purity, of an immediate conversation with God the father, and maker of all things." "Moreover, we say that the souls of the wicked being reunited to the same bodies, shall be consigned over to eternal torments.—If you will affirm this to be incredible or impossible, there is no help, but you must fall from error to error, till the day of judgment convinces you we are in the right."

"I must tell you likewise, that of all men living we are the greatest promoters of peace, and bring you in the most powerful auxiliaries to establish it in your dominions, by teaching that 'tis impossible for any worker of iniquity, any covetous or insidious person, any one, either vicious or virtuous, to hide himself from God; and that every one is stepping forward into everlasting misery or happiness according to his works; and if all men were

once fully possessed with a notion of these things, who would make the bold adventure to embrace the pleasures of sin for a season, with his eyes upon eternal fire at the end of the enjoyment?"

Dwelling at large on the morality of the gospel, he says, "a Christian hand must by no means be lifted up in resistance; or Christ will not have his disciples like the rest of the world, but orders them to shine with a distinguishing patience and meekness, and to win men over from their sins by such gentle arts of conversion. And I could give you a proof of the influence of such bright examples from many converts among us, who from men of violence and oppression were transformed into quite another nature, perfectly overcome by the passive courage of their Christian neighbours, or by observing the new astonishing patience of such injured Christians as they chanced to travel with, or the experience they had of their fidelity in their dealings."

We have not room for the whole of his apology, but enough to display the character of Christians at that day, it is desirable to present.

The following shows his faithfulness. "Turn back your thoughts upon the past emperors, and you'll find they all died like other men; and could you but discover one, to be in a state of insensibility, you would make a welcome discovery to the wicked world; but since all departed souls continue in sensation, and everlasting fire is treasured up for the unrighteous, let me advise you to look well about you, and lay these things seriously to heart."

"Now hell is that place where the wicked live, and such as disbelieve the revelations of God by Christ, shall suffer; and the *Sybil*, and *Hystaspes* hath both given out

that this whole system of corruptibles shall be destroyed by fire; nay, the *Stoics* have a conceit, that God himself shall be resolved into fire, and that there shall rise a new world refined from the ruins of the old: but we conceive far more honourably of God, than to range the Creator of the universe among things subject to alteration."

He quotes a large number of the prominent prophecies concerning the Logos, and shows how they were fulfilled in Christ. He also dwells upon the life of Christ; shows his resurrection, his ascension and his exaltation;—thus preaching the gospel to Cæsar.

The doctrines of demons, he continually opposes. "These evil spirits," says he, "likewise do all they can to smother the notion of hell fire, but to as little purpose as they attempted to stifle the coming of Christ from the knowledge of the world; for all they can do, is only to prevail with unreasonable people; such as have been slaves to their lusts, and blindly take up with the opinions in fashion; these, I say, are the only people they work upon to hunt us out of our lives; and yet to these mortal enemies are we so far from returning hatred for hatred, that from our hearts we pity them, and desire nothing more than to bring them over to a better mind."

What follows is very important ecclesiastical information.

"I shall now lay before you the manner of dedicating ourselves to God, through Christ, upon our conversion; for should I omit this I might seem not to deal sincerely in this account of the Christian religion. As many therefore as are persuaded, and believe, that the things taught and said by us are true, and moreover take upon them to live accordingly, are taught to pray and ask of God with fasting and forgiveness of their former sins; we

praying together, and fasting for and with them, and then, *and not till then*, they are brought to a place of water, and there regenerated after the same manner with ourselves; for they are washed in the name of God the father, and Lord of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, for Christ has said, ‘Unless you are born again you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven,’ John iii. 3. 5. (But you all know it is impossible to enter a second time into our mother’s womb) and in allusion to this, the prophet *Isaiah*, in the words above cited, speaks, when he prescribes the method by which repenting sinners may avoid the consequence of their sins; ‘Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, learn to do well, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. But if you refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.’ *Isaiah* i. 16—20.”

“After the believer is baptized, and so incorporated or made one with us, we lead him to the congregation of the brethren, as we call them, and then with great fervency pour out our souls in common prayers both for ourselves, for the person baptized, and for all others all the world over; that having embraced the truth, our conversation might be as becometh the gospel, and that we may be found doers of the word, and so at length be saved with an everlasting salvation. Prayers being over we salute each other with a kiss: after this, bread and a cup of wine and water are brought to the president or bishop, which he takes, and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of his Son and

the Holy Spirit; and this thanksgiving to God for vouchsafing us worthy of these his creatures, is a prayer of more than ordinary length. When the bishop has finished the prayers, and the thanksgiving service, all the people present conclude with an audible voice, saying, *Amen*; now *amen* in the Hebrew tongue, is, *so be it*. The eucharistical office being thus performed by the bishop, and concluded with the acclamation of all the people, those we call deacons distribute to every one present to partake of this eucharistical bread and wine, and water, and then they carry it to the absent.

“The food we call the eucharist, of which none are allowed to be partakers, but such only as are true believers, and have been baptized in the laver of regeneration for the remission of sins, and live according to Christ’s precepts; for we do not take this as common bread, and common wine: but as Jesus Christ our Saviour was made flesh by the *Logos* of God, and had real flesh and blood for our salvation, so are we taught that this food, which the very same *Logos* blessed by prayer and thanksgiving, is turned into the nourishment and substance of our flesh and blood; and is in some sense the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus. For the apostles, in their commentaries called the gospels, have left this command upon record, ‘that Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he said, do this in commemoration of me, for this is my body: and in like manner he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, this is my blood,’ and delivered it to them only. And this very solemnity too the evil spirits have introduced in the mysteries of *Mithra*; for you do, or may know, that when any one is initiated into this religion, bread and a cup of water, with a certain form of words are made

use of in the sacrifice. After this sacrament is over, we remind each other of the obligations to his duty, and the rich relieve the poor; and upon such charitable accounts we visit some or other every day.

“And in every eucharistical sacrifice we bless the Maker of all things, through his son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit: and upon the day called Sunday, all that live either in city or country meet together at the same place, where the writings of the apostles and prophets are read, as much as time will give leave; when the reader has done, the bishop makes a sermon, wherein he instructs the people, and animates them to the practice of such lovely precepts; at the conclusion of this discourse, we all rise up together and pray; and prayers being over, as I now said, there is bread, and wine, and water offered, and the bishop, as before, sends up prayers and thanksgivings, with all the fervency he is able, and the people conclude all with the joyful acclamation of *amen*: then the consecrated elements are distributed to, and partaken of, by all that are present, and sent to the absent by the hands of the deacons.

“But the wealthy and the willing, for every one is at liberty, contribute as they think fitting; and this collection is deposited with the bishop, and out of this he relieves the orphan and the widow, and such as are reduced to want, by sickness or any other cause, and such as are in bonds, and strangers that come from far; and in a word, he is the guardian and almoner to all the indigent.

“Upon Sunday we all assemble, that being the first day in which God set himself to work upon the dark void, in order to make the world, and in which Jesus Christ our Saviour rose again from the dead; for the day before Saturday he was crucified, and the day after,

which is Sunday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples, and taught them what I have now proposed to your consideration."

The information and arguments contained in this apology were not in vain. "Antoninus was a man of sense and humanity, open to conviction, uncorrupted by the vain and chimerical philosophy of the times, and desirous of doing justice to all mankind. Asia Propria was still the scene of vital Christianity and of cruel persecution. Thence the Christians applied to Antoninus, complaining of the many injuries which they sustained from the people of the country, who it seems laid to the charge of the Christians the earthquakes which had lately happened. The Pagans were much terrified, and ascribed them to the vengeance of Heaven against the Christians. We have both in Eusebius* and at the end of Justin's first Apology, the edict sent to the common council of Asia, every line of which will deserve our attention.

The Emperor to the Common Council of Asia.

"I am quite of opinion, that the gods will take care to discover such persons. For it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them than you, if they be able. But you harass and vex them, and accuse them of atheism and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes, which have happened in past times, or lately, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency when they happen, to desire

* B. 4. xi. xñ. xiii.

you to compare your spirit with theirs, and observe how serenely they confide in God? In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and neglect their worship, and you live in the practical ignorance of the Supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning these men some others of the provincial governors wrote to our divine father (Adrian) to whom he returned answer, that they should not be molested, unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government. Many also have signified to me concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer, agreeably to the maxims of my father. But if any will still accuse any of them as such (as Christians), let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian, and let the accuser be punished.' Set up at Ephesus in the common assembly of Asia.

"Eusebius informs us, that this was no empty edict, but was really put in execution. Nor did this emperor content himself with one edict. He wrote to the same purport to the Larisseans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks.

"As this prince reigned twenty-three years, such vigorous measures must, after some time at least, have had their effect. And we may fairly conclude that during a great part of this reign the Christians were permitted to worship God in peace."

One would almost think the preaching of Justin had not been without some influence on his heart.

"The edict of this good emperor is a singularly valuable testimony in favour of the Christians of that time. It appears that there were then a race of men devoted to the service of Christ, ready to die for his name and on

account of his religion, rather than to renounce it, who exemplified the superior worth of that religion by a superior probity and innocence of manners, so as to appear as the best of subjects in the opinion of an emperor of the highest candour, intelligence, and acute observation. They were not inferior to the best of the heathens in morality, and had besides, what this emperor confesses their enemies were void of, a sincere spirit of reverence for the Supreme Being, an unaffected contempt of death, and that to which stoicism pretends, a real serenity of mind under the most pressing dangers, and this grounded on an unshaken confidence in God. We see hence that the outpouring of the spirit of God, which began at the feast of Pentecost, was still continued. Christians were so in power, and not in name only, by the testimony of an heathen prince; and those who would substitute morality in the room of their religion, would do well to consider, that good morality itself knows no support like that of Christianity. This divine religion comprehends every possible good thing that can be found in all others, and has, over and above, its own peculiar virtues, and a fund of consolation and an energy of support under the prospect of death itself, and points out the only safe and sure road to a blissful immortality."

CHAPTER IX.

Marcus Antoninus.—Pride and Blindness of Man.—Power of Grace manifest in the Christians.

IN the year 161 Marcus Antoninus became emperor. Speedily did he dissipate the repose allowed by his pre-

decessor. He became "an implacable persecutor of Christians, and this not from mere ignorance of their moral character. He knew them, yet hated them, and showed them no mercy. He allowed and encouraged the most barbarous treatment of their persons, and was yet himself a person of great humanity of temper, just and beneficent to the rest of mankind; free from all reproach in his general conduct, and in several parts of it a model worthy the imitation of Christians.

"I think it impossible to solve the phenomenon on any other principles than those by which the enmity of many philosophers of old, and of many devotees and exact moralists of modern times against the Christian religion, is to be explained. The gospel is not only in its own nature distinct from careless and dissolute vice, but also from the whole religion of philosophers, I mean of those who form to themselves a religion from natural and self devised sources, either in opposition to or with the neglect of the revealed word of God, and the influence of his Holy Spirit, applying that word to the heart of man. In all ages it will be found that the more strenuously men support such religion, the more vehemently do they hate Christianity. Their religion is pride and self-importance, denies the fallen state of man, the provision and efficacy of grace, and the glory of God and the Redeemer. The enmity hence occasioned is obvious. It must be considered then that Marcus Antoninus was of the stoical sect, who carried self-sufficiency to the utmost pitch.

"He fancied that he carried God within him. Like most of the philosophers he held the doctrine of the *To εἶναι*, but he held it in all its detestable impiety and arrogance. With him to be good and virtuous was the easiest thing in the world; it was only to follow nature, and to obey

the dictates of the deity, man's own soul, which was divine and self-sufficient. He could not with these views be humble, nor pray earnestly, nor feel his own internal wickedness and misery, nor bear the idea of a Saviour and Mediator. Had he contented himself with Pius to be a vulgar person in religion, the humanity of his nature, especially if aided by an equally sound understanding, (but of that I have some doubt) would probably have led him like Pius, to have respected the excellent character and virtues of Christians, and he would have felt it his duty to have protected such peaceable and deserving subjects. But the pride of philosophy seems to have been hurt. Whoever has attended to the spirit of his Twelve books of Meditations, and duly compared them with the doctrine of the gospel, must see them to be totally opposite, and will not wonder that Christians felt from a serious stoic what might have been expected from a flagitious Nero. Pride and licentiousness are equally condemned by the gospel, and equally seek revenge. If this be a true state of the case, the philosophic spirit, stated as above, however differently modified in different ages, will always be inimical to the gospel, and the best of moralists will be found in union with the worst of villains on this subject. 'Beware of philosophy,' is a precept which as much calls for our attention now as ever.

"Yet so fascinating is the power of prejudice and education, that many would look on it as a grievous crime to attempt to tear the laurels of virtue from the brows of Marcus Antoninus. Certainly however, had his virtue been genuine, or at all a piece with that of the scriptures, he could never have treated Christians. as we shall see he did.

“Yet this is he whom Mr. Pope celebrates in those lines,

Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or failing, smiles in exile or in chains,
Like good Aurelius let him reign, or bleed
Like Socrates, that man is great indeed.*

“Providence seems however to have determined, that those who, in contradiction to the feelings of human nature, dark and indigent as it is, and needing a heaven imparted virtue, will yet proudly exalt their own sufficiency, shall be frustrated and put to shame. The latter of these men, with his last breath, gave a sanction to the most absurd idolatry, and the former did such deeds as I almost shudder to relate.”

“If we attend to the notices of history on the education and manners of Marcus, the account which has been given of his enmity against the gospel will be amply confirmed. Adrian had introduced him among the Salian priests when eight years old, and he became accurately versed in the rituals of his priesthood. At twelve he began to wear the philosopher’s cloak; he practised austerities, lay on the bare ground, and was with difficulty persuaded by his mother to use a mattress and slight coverlet. He placed in his private chapel gold statues of his deceased masters, and visited their sepulchral monuments, and there offered sacrifices, and strewed flowers. So devoted was he to stoicism, that he attended the schools after he became emperor; and the faith which he put in dreams sufficiently proves his superstitious credulity. From a man so much lifted up by self-sufficiency, bigotry, and superstition, so illiberal a censure as this

* Some readers may perhaps need to be informed that Antoninus was also called Aurelius.

of the Christians* is not matter of surprise. ‘This readiness (he is speaking of being resigned to the prospect of death) ought to proceed from a propriety of deliberate judgment, not from mere unintelligent obstinacy, as is the case of Christians, but should be founded on grounds of solid reason, and with calm composure, without any tragical raptures, and in such a way as may induce others to admire and imitate.’ Had this emperor ever attended to the dying scenes of Christians tortured to death by his orders, with any degree of candour and impartiality, he might have seen all these circumstances exemplified in their deaths. Thousands of them have suffered with deliberate judgment, preferring heavenly things to earthly, having counted the cost, and made a reasonable decision, not uncertain (as he expresses himself) concerning a future life, calmly departing this life without any circumstances to justify the suspicion of pride or ostentation, and adorned with meekness, cheerfulness, and charity, which induced tens of thousands to examine what that hidden energy of Christian life must be, which produces such exalted sentiments and such grandeur of spirit. And the power of prejudice was never more strongly exhibited than in this malignant sentence; which, in truth, is the more inexcusable, because he laboured under no involuntary ignorance of Christians. For, besides the knowledge of them which he must have acquired under his predecessor, he had an opportunity of knowing them from various apologies published in his reign.”

* 11th b. sect. 3d

CHAPTER X.

Justin Martyr.

SHORTLY after his First Apology, Justin Martyr left Rome and went to Ephesus, where he had his discourse with Trypho the Jew. On his return to Rome, he had frequent contests with Crescens the philosopher, a man equally remarkable for "malignity to Christians, and for the most horrid vices." He now presented his Second Apology, hoping to produce the same favourable effect upon Marcus that he had upon his predecessor, but he had to do with too implacable an enemy. "The immediate occasion of the Second Apology was this, as he himself relates. 'A certain woman at Rome had, together with her husband, lived in extreme profligacy and licentiousness. But on her conversion to Christianity, being changed herself, she endeavoured to persuade her husband also to imitate her example, representing to him the punishment of eternal fire, which in a future state would be inflicted on the disobedient. But he persisting in his wickedness, she was induced to wish for a separation. By the advice of her friends she continued however to live with him, hoping in time he might be brought to repentance. Upon his coming to Alexandria, he proceeded to greater lengths of wickedness, so that, finding the connexion now no longer tolerable, she procured a divorce from him. He, not impressed with the happy change which had taken place in her dispositions, and unmoved with her compassionate attempts to rescue him from ruin, accused her of being a Christian. Upon which she presented a petition to you,

O emperor, that she might have time to dispose and regulate her household affairs, and after that promised to answer to the charge, which petition you granted. The husband finding his wife to have gained a respite from his malice, diverted it to another object, to one Ptolemy, who had instructed her in Christianity, and who had been punished by Urbicius the prefect of Rome. He persuaded a centurion his friend to imprison Ptolemy, and ask him whether he was a Christian. He, no flatterer or dissembler, ingenuously confessed, and was a long time punished with imprisonment. At last, when he was brought before Urbicius, and asked only this question whether he was a Christian, he confessed himself a teacher of the divine truth. For no true Christian can act otherwise. Urbicius, ordering him to be led to execution, one Lucius, himself a Christian, observing the absurdity of these proceedings, expostulated with Urbicius, on the iniquity of putting men to death merely for a name, abstracted from any one specific charge of guilt, a conduct unworthy of emperors such as Pius the last, or Philosophus the present,* or the sacred Senate. You too seem to me to be of the same sect, was all that the prefect deigned to reply. Lucius confessed that he was, and was himself led also to execution, which he bore with triumphant serenity, declaring that he was now going from unrighteous governors to God his gracious Father and King. A third person was sentenced also to death on the same occasion. And I also, continues Justin, expect by persons of this sort to be murdered, perhaps by Crescens the pretended philosopher. For the name

* "I am aware that the Greek in Justin would make it probable that Pius was then reigning; but Eusebius's contrary testimony determines me to think otherwise."

really belongs not to a man who publicly accuses Christians of atheism and impiety, to please many deceived persons, though he is totally ignorant of their real character. I myself have interrogated him, and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the subject. I am willing to undergo an examination before you in company with him. And if my questions and his answers were known, it would appear evident to yourself that he knows nothing of our affairs, or at least conceals what he does know.'

"But Marcus was not a man to exercise common justice towards Christians. The philosophic garb was no shield to Justin, even in the eyes of an emperor, who piqued himself on the surname of philosopher. The sincerity of his Christian attachments outweighed every argument and every plausible appearance in his favour. Crescens procured his imprisonment for the crime of being a Christian, the greatest evil of which a human being could be guilty in the eyes of this emperor. The Acts of his Martyrdom, which carry more marks of truth than many other martyrologies, give this account.* 'He and six of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Rusticus the prefect, who I suppose had succeeded Urbicius, a man famous for his attachment to stoicism, and a person of considerable eminence. He had been tutor to the emperor, who acknowledges in the First Book of his Meditations, his obligations to him on several accounts, and particularly for his teaching him to be of a placable and forgiving temper. An instance, one among thousands, that it is possible for a man to be strongly impressed with many beautiful ideas of morality, and still to remain an inflexible enemy to the gospel. Rusticus undertook to persuade Justin to obey the gods,

* Cave's Life of Justin.

and comply with the emperor's edicts. He defended the reasonableness of his religion. Upon which the governor inquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been educated. He told him, that he had endeavoured to understand all kinds of discipline, and tried all methods of learning, but finding satisfaction in none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine, however fashionable it might be to despise it. Wretch! replies the indignant magistrate, art thou captivated then by that religion? I am, says Justin, I follow the Christians, and their doctrine is right. What is their doctrine? It is this, we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible, and confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old, and who shall hereafter appear the Judge of mankind, a Saviour, teacher, and master to all those who are duly instructed by him. As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity; this was the business of the prophets, who many ages ago had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world. Where do the Christians usually assemble? The God of the Christians is not confined to any particular place. In what place do you instruct your scholars? Justin mentioned the place in which he dwelt, and told him that there he explained Christianity to all who resorted to him. The prefect having severally examined his companions, again addressed Justin. Hear thou who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in the possession of truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven? Although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Christians, as I know that the divine grace and favour is laid up for all such, and shall be

so while the world endures. Do you think that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward? I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it which excludes all doubt. Rusticus insisted that they should all go together, and sacrifice to the gods. No man whose understanding is sound, replies Justin, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety. Unless you comply you shall be tormented without mercy. We desire nothing more sincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Hence our happiness is promoted, and we shall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear. The rest assented, despatch quickly your purpose, we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols. The governor then pronounced sentence, As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws. The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were whipped and afterwards beheaded. The dead bodies were taken by Christian friends, and decently interred.'

"Thus slept in Jesus the Christian philosopher Justin, about the year 163, and about the third or fourth year of the reign of Marcus. His Apologies and his Dialogue with Trypho have been mentioned already. Like many of the ancient fathers he appears to us under the greatest disadvantage. Works really his have been lost, and others ascribed to him, which are some of them not his, and others at least of ambiguous authority. He is the first Christian since the apostles' days, who added to an unquestionable zeal and love for the gospel the character of a man of learning and philosophy. His early habits

were retained, and yet were consecrated to the service of God. He, at least, should not be suspected of unreasonable impulses and fancies. His religion was doubtless the effect of serious and long deliberation, and the very best and most important use which a gentleman and a scholar can make of his rational faculties, to determine his choice in religion, was made by Justin. He examined the various philosophic sects, not merely for the purpose of amusement or ostentation, but to find out God, and in God true happiness. He tried and found them all wanting; he sought him in the gospel, he found him there, confessed him, gave up every thing for him, was satisfied with his choice, and died in serenity. His persevering in the profession of philosophy might probably have another view besides the gratification of his own taste. He might hope to conciliate the affections of philosophers, and allure them to Christianity. The charity of his heart appears indeed to be great. He prayed for all men, he declined no dangers for the good of souls, he involved himself in disputes with philosophers for their benefit, to the extreme hazard of himself. His house was open for the instruction of all who consulted him: though he seems to have never assumed the ecclesiastical character. To draw gentlemen and persons of a liberal education to pay a regard to Christianity, seems to have been his chief employment. But he found it easier to throw away his own life than to persuade one philosopher to become a Christian."

"A man of his learning and sagacity should not be supposed destitute of argument and system in his views. Men of sense will scarce think the ideas of such a person unworthy of their attention. Let us see then briefly what Justin thought in religion. I shall quote only from

works undoubtedly his. We may possibly see that Christian principles may be seriously maintained in consistence with the love of science and letters, and perhaps we may observe some degree of adulteration, which they received from passing through a channel of all others the most unfavourable for the conducting of their course, the channel of philosophy.

“It is certain Justin worshipped Christ as the true God in the full and proper sense of the words. We have seen one testimony of it already in his examination before Rusticus. But let the reader hear his words. Trypho* the Jew finds fault with the Christians on account of this very sentiment. ‘To me it appears,’ says he, ‘a paradox incapable of any sound proof, to say, that this Christ was God before all time, and that then he was made man, and suffered: and to assert that he was any thing more than a man, of men, appears not only paradoxical but foolish.’ ‘I know,’ answered Justin, ‘that it appears paradoxical, and particularly to those of your nation, who are determined neither to know nor do the will of God, but to follow the inventions of your teachers, as God declares of you. However if I could not demonstrate that he existed before all time, being God the Son of the Maker of the universe, and was made man of the Virgin, yet as this personage was shown by every sort of proof to be the Christ of God, be the question as it may respecting his divinity and humanity, you have no right to deny that he is the Christ of God, even if he were only mere man; you could only say, that I was mistaken in my idea of his character. For there are some who call themselves Christians, who confess him to be the Christ, but mere man only, with whom I agree not,

* Dialogue, p. 63.

nor most of those who bear that name, because we are commanded by Christ himself not to obey the precepts of men, but his own injunctions, and those of the holy prophets. Those, says Trypho, who say that he was man alone, and was in a particular manner anointed, and made Christ, appear to me to speak more rationally than you. For we all expect Christ a man, of men, that Elias will come to anoint him.* What we seem to be taught by the passage is this; that the general body of Christians in the second century held the proper deity of Jesus Christ, that they believed that this was a part of Old Testament revelation, that they looked on a small number who held his mere humanity to be men who preferred human teachers to divine; and that in this they agree with the Jews, the most implacable enemies of Christianity, who yet, abstracted from the question of the person of Christ, were inexcusable in denying his divine mission."

"In another part of the same dialogue,* he speaks of Christ as the God of Israel who was with Moses, and shows what he meant when he said that true Christians regarded what they were taught by the prophets.

"The all important doctrine of justification he states† in the same manner as St. Paul does, believing that to press the necessity of Mosaic rites on others was to fall from the faith of Christ, and the learned reader may see more at large his views of regeneration and forgiveness of all past sins through Christ Jesus,† and how extremely different his views were from that nominal Christianity which contents so many.

"He appears to have the clearest views of that special

* Page 56.

† Dialogue 62.

‡ First Apology 159, 160, and 68 Dialogue.

illumination, without which no man will understand and relish real godliness. His first unknown instructor had taught him this, and he seems never to have forgotten it. He informs Trypho, that for their wickedness, God had hidden from the Jews the power of knowing divine wisdom, except a remnant, who according to the grace of his compassion were reserved, that their nation might not be like Sodom and Gomorrah. The eternal punishment of the wicked he avows" with the utmost plainness.

Justin was not the only one who approached the emperor with arguments and entreaties. "Tatian also, the disciple of Justin, Athenagoras, Apollinaris bishop of Hierapolis, and Theophilus of Antioch, and Melito of Sardis published Apologies. This last published his about the year 177, of which some valuable remains are preserved in Eusebius. A part of his address to Marcus deserves to be quoted* on account of the justness of the sentiments, and the politeness with which they are delivered. 'Pious persons aggrieved by new edicts published throughout Asia, and never before practised, now suffer persecution. For audacious sycophants, and men who covet other persons' goods, take advantage of these proclamations openly to rob and spoil the innocent by night and by day. If this be done through your order, let it stand good; for a just emperor cannot act unjustly, and we will cheerfully carry away the honour of such a death; this only we humbly crave of your majesty, that, after an impartial examination of us and our accusers, you would justly decide whether we deserve death and punishment, or life and protection. But if these proceedings be not yours, and the new edicts be not the ef-

* B. 4. 25 c.

fects of your personal judgment, (edicts which ought not to be enacted against barbarian enemies) in that case we entreat you not to despise us, who are thus unjustly oppressed.' He afterwards reminds him of the justice done to Christians by his two immediate predecessors."

CHAPTER XI.

Polycarp.

"THE year 167, the sixth of Marcus, Smyrna was distinguished by the martyrdom of her bishop Polycarp.

"The reader has heard of him before in the account of Ignatius. He had succeeded Bucolus, a vigilant and industrious bishop, in the charge of Smyrna. The apostles, and we may apprehend St. John particularly, ordained him to this office. He had been familiarly conversant with the apostles, and received the government of the church from those who had been eye-witnesses and ministers of our Lord, and continually taught that which he had been taught by them.* Usher, in his Prolegom. to Ignatius, has laboured to show† that he was the angel of the church of Smyrna addressed by our Saviour. If he is not mistaken in this, the character of Polycarp is delineated by a hand indeed divine, and the martyrdom before us was particularly predicted. He must indeed have presided seventy-four years over that church by this account; but we shall hereafter see that his age must have been extremely great. He certainly long survived his friend Ignatius, and was reserved to suffer by Marcus

* Euseb. 4. ch. 14.

† Cave's Life of Polycarp.

Antoninus. Some time before this he came to Rome to hold a conference with Anicetus, the bishop of that See, concerning the time of observing Easter. The matter was soon decided between them, as all matters should be which enter not into the essence of godliness. They each observed their own customs without any breach of charity between them, real or apparent. But he found more important employment while at Rome. The heresy of Marcion was strong in that city; and the testimony and zealous labours of one who had known so much of the apostles were successfully employed against it, and many were reclaimed. It was not in Marcion's power to undermine the authority of this venerable Asiatic. To procure a seeming coalition was the utmost he could expect, and it was as suitable to his views to attempt this, as it was to those of Polycarp to oppose. Meeting him one day in the street, he called out to him, 'Polycarp, own us.' 'I do own thee,' says the zealous bishop, 'to be the first born of Satan.' I shall refer the reader to what has been said already of St. John's similar conduct on such occasions, adding only that Irenæus, from whom Eusebius relates the story, commends his conduct, and speaks of it as commonly practised by the apostles and their followers. Irenæus informs us* that he had a particular delight in recounting what had been told by those who had seen Christ in the flesh, that he used to relate what he had been informed concerning his doctrine and miracles, and when he heard of any heretical attempts to overturn Christian fundamentals, he would cry out, To what times, O God, hast thou reserved me! and would leave the place.

"Indeed when it is considered what Marcion maintain-

* Irenæus, Epistle to Florin.

ed, and what unquestionable evidence Polycarp had against him in point of matter of fact, we shall see he had just reason to testify his disapprobation. The man was one of the Docetæ; with him Christ had no real manhood at all. He rejected the whole Old Testament, and mutilated the New. He held two principles, after the manner of the Manichees, in order to account for the origin of evil. If men who assert things so fundamentally subversive of the gospel, would openly disavow the Christian name, they might be endured with much more composure by Christians, nor would there be any call for so scrupulous an absence from their society, as St. Paul has determined the case.* But for such men, whether ancient or modern, to call themselves Christians, is an intolerable insult on the common sense of mankind. We know nothing more of the life of this great man. Of the circumstances of his death, we have an account, and they deserve a copious relation.

“The greatest part of the ancient narrative is preserved by Eusebius.† The beginning and the end, which he has not given us, have been restored by the care of archbishop Usher. It is an epistle written in the name of Polycarp’s church of Smyrna: I have ventured to translate the whole myself, yet not without examining what Valesius, the Editor of Eusebius, and archbishop Wake, have left us on the subject. It is doubtless one of the most precious ornaments of antiquity, and it seemed to deserve also some notes and illustrations.

“ ‘The church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to that which sojourns at Philomelium,‡ and in all places

* 1 Cor. 5. x.

† B. 4. Euseb. hist. ch. xv.

‡ A city of Lycaonia. I thought it right to give the English reader the original idea of sojourning. It was the usual language and the spirit too of the church at that time.

where the holy catholic church sojourns throughout the world, may the mercy, peace, and love of God the father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied! We have written to you, brethren, as well concerning the other martyrs, as particularly the blessed Polycarp, who, as it were, sealing by his testimony, closed the persecution. For all these things which were done were so conducted, that the Lord from above might exhibit to us the nature of a martyrdom perfectly evangelical. For Polycarp did not precipitately give himself up to death, but waited till he was apprehended, as our Lord himself did, that we might imitate him; not only caring for ourselves, but also for our neighbours. It is the office of solid and genuine charity not only to desire our own salvation, but also that of all the brethren.* Blessed and noble indeed are all martyrdoms, which are regulated according to the will of God. For it behoves us who assume to ourselves the character of Christians, a name professing distinguished sanctity, to submit to God alone the arbitration of all wants.† Doubtless their magnanimity, their patience, their love of the Lord, deserve the admiration of every one; who though torn with whips till the frame and structure of their bodies was laid open even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured: so that those who

* "I translate according to the Greek. But though common candour may put a favourable construction on the expressions, the honour then put on martyrdom seems excessive.

† "They doubtless mean to censure the self-will of those who threw themselves on their persecutors before they were providentially called to it. And doubtless the calm patience of Polycarp, in this respect, much excelled the impetuosity of Ignatius. But Polycarp was much older than he was when Ignatius suffered, and very probably had grown in grace. And the Asiatic churches seem to have corrected the errors of excessive zeal, which even in their best Christians had formerly prevailed."

stood around pitied them and lamented. But such was their fortitude, that none uttered a sigh or groan, evincing to us all that at that hour the martyrs of Christ, though tormented, were absent, as it were, from the body, or rather that the Lord being present, conversed familiarly with them; and they, supported by the grace of Christ, despised the torments of this world, by one hour redeeming themselves from eternal punishment. And the fire of savage tormentors was cold to them. For they had steadily in view a desire to avoid that fire which is eternal and never to be quenched. And with the eyes of their heart they had respect to the good things reserved for those who endure, *things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.* But they were then exhibited to them by the Lord, being indeed no longer men, but angels. In like manner those who were condemned to the wild beasts underwent for a time cruel torments, being placed under shells of sea-fish, and exposed to various other tortures, that if possible the infernal tyrant, by an uninterrupted series of suffering, might tempt them to deny their master. Much did Satan contrive against them;* but, thanks to God, without effect against them all. The magnanimous Germanicus, by his patience, strengthened the weak, who fought with wild beasts in an illustrious manner; for the proconsul, desirous of persuading him, and telling him to pity his age, he drew the wild beasts to himself by provocations, desirous of departing more quickly from a world of wickedness. And now the whole multitude, admiring the fortitude of Christians, the

* "The language of these ancient Christians deserves to be noticed; they have their eye more steadily on a divine influence on the one hand, and a diabolical one on the other, than is fashionable in our times."

true friends and worshippers of God, cried out, Take away the atheists,* let Polycarp be sought for. One, by name Quintus, lately come from Phrygia, his native country, on sight of the beasts, trembled. He had persuaded some persons to present themselves before the tribunal of their own accord. Him the proconsul, by soothing speeches, induced to swear and to sacrifice. On this account, brethren, we do not approve of those who offer themselves to martyrdom; for we have not so learned Christ.

“ ‘ The admirable Polycarp, when he heard what passed, was quite unmoved, and desired to remain in the city. But, induced by the intreaties of his people, he retired to a village not far from the city; and spent the time with a few friends, night and day, in nothing else than in praying for all the churches in the world, according to his usual custom. Three days before he was seized he had a vision while he was praying. He saw his pillow consumed by fire, and turning to the company he said prophetically, I must be burnt alive. Those who sought him being at hand, he retired to another village; and immediately the officers came to the house, and not finding him, they seized two servants, one of whom was induced, by torture, to confess the place of his retreat. Certainly it was impossible to conceal him, since even those of his own household discovered him. And the tetrarch, called Cleronomus Herod, hastened to introduce him into the stadium, that so he might obtain his lot as a partaker of Christ, and those who betrayed him might share with Judas. Taking then the servant as their guide, they went out about supper-time, with their usual arms, as against a robber, and arriving late, they

* The term of reproach then commonly affixed to Christians.

found him lying in an upper room at the end of the house, whence he might have made his escape,* but he would not, saying, The will of the Lord be done. Hearing that they were arrived, he came down and conversed with them, those who were present admiring his age and constancy; some said, was it worth while to take pains to apprehend so aged a person? He immediately ordered meat and drink to be set before them, as much as they pleased, and begged them to allow him one hour to pray without molestation; which being granted, he prayed standing, full of the grace of God, so that he could not be silent for two hours; and the hearers were astonished, and many of them repented that they were come to seize so divine a character

“ ‘When he had ceased praying, having made mention of all whom he had ever known, small and great, noble and vulgar, and of the whole catholic church through the world, the hour of departing being come, they set him on an ass and led him to the city.† The irenarch Herod and his father Nicetes met him, who taking him up into their chariot, began to advise him, asking, What harm is it to say, lord Cæsar, and to sacrifice, and be safe? At first he was silent, but being pressed, he said, I will not follow your advice. When they could not persuade him, they treated him abusively, and thrust him out of the chariot, so that in falling he bruised his thigh. But he, still unmoved as if he had suffered nothing, went on

* “Those who know the eastern custom of flat-roofed houses, will not be surprised at this.”

† “I have not thought it worth while to translate what relates to the time when Polycarp suffered, in which the learned disagree in the mode of interpretation.”

cheerfully under the conduct of his guards to the stadium. There the tumult being so great that few could hear any thing, a voice from heaven said to Polycarp, entering on the stadium,* Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man. None saw the speaker, but many of us heard the voice.

“ ‘When he was brought to the tribunal, there was a great tumult, as soon as it was generally understood that Polycarp was apprehended. The proconsul asked him, if he was Polycarp, to which he assented. The other began to advise him, pity thy great age, and the like. Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent, say, Take away the atheists. Polycarp, with a grave aspect, beholding all the multitude, waving his hand to them, and looking up to heaven, said, Take away the atheists. The proconsul urging him, and saying, Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ,—Polycarp said, Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me; and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me! The other still urging, Swear by the fortune of Cæsar,—Polycarp said, If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Cæsar, as you speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am. I am a Christian; and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and hear. The proconsul said, Persuade the people. Polycarp said, I have thought proper to address you: for we are taught to pay all honour to magistracies and powers appointed by God, which is consistent with a good conscience. But I do not hold them worthy to apologize

* “The reader should remember that miraculous interpositions of various kinds were still frequent in the church.”

before them.* I have wild beasts, says the proconsul. I will expose you to them, unless you repent. Call them, replies the martyr. Our minds are not to be changed from the better to the worse: but it is a good thing to be changed from evil to good. I will tame your spirit by fire, says the other, since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent. You threaten me with fire, answers Polycarp, which burns for a moment, and will be soon extinct; but are ignorant of the future judgment, and the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you please. Saying this and more, he was filled with confidence and joy, and grace shone in his countenance; so that he was so far from being confounded by the menaces, that, on the contrary, the proconsul was visibly embarrassed; he sent, however, the herald to proclaim thrice, in the midst of the assembly, Polycarp hath confessed himself a Christian. Upon this all the multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, with insatiable rage shouted aloud, This is the doctor of Asia, the father of Christians, the subverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to sacrifice nor to adore. They now begged Philip, the asiarch, to let out a lion against Polycarp. But he refused, observing that the amphitheatrical spectacles of the wild beasts were finished. They then unanimously shouted, that he should be burnt alive; for his vision was of necessity to be accomplished. Whilst he was praying he observed the fire kindling, and turning to the faithful that were with him, he said prophetically, I must be burnt alive. The work was executed with all possible speed: the people immediately gathered fuel

* "I cannot think that this was said in contempt of the vulgar, but on account of the prejudice and enmity which their conduct exhibited at that time."

from the workshops and baths, in which employment the Jews* distinguished themselves with their usual malice. As soon as the fire was prepared, stripping off his clothes, and loosing his girdle, he attempted to take off his shoes, a thing unusual to him before, because each of the faithful were wont to strive who should be most assiduous in serving him. For before his martyrdom his integrity and blameless conduct had always procured him the most unfeigned respect. Immediately the usual appendages of burning were placed about him. And when they were going to fasten him to the stake, he said, Let me remain as I am: for He who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain unmoved in the fire. Upon which they bound him without nailing him. And he, putting his hands behind him, and being bound as a distinguished ram selected from a great flock, a burnt-offering acceptable to God Almighty, said, O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained the knowledge of thee, O God of angels and principalities, and of all creation, and of all the just who live in thy sight, I bless thee, that thou hast counted me worthy of this day, and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost; among whom may I be received before thee this day as a sacrifice well savoured and acceptable, as thou the faithful and true God

* "I scarce know a more striking view of the judicial curse inflicted on the Jews than this. Indeed this people all along exerted themselves in persecution, and Justin Martyr tells us of a charge which had been sent from Jerusalem by the chief priests against Christians, directed to their brethren through the world."

hast prepared, declaring beforehand and fulfilling accordingly. Wherefore I praise thee for all those things, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy well beloved Son: through whom, with him in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee both now and for ever. *Amen.*

“ ‘And when he had pronounced Amen aloud, and finished prayer, the officers lighted the fire. And a great flame bursting out, we, to whom it was given to see, saw a wonder, who also were reserved to relate to others that which happened. For the flame forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, was as a wall round about the body of the martyr. And it was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refined in a furnace. We received also in our nostrils such a fragrance, as of frankincense, or some other precious perfume. At length the impious observing that his body could not be consumed by the fire, ordered the confector* to approach, and to plunge his sword into his body. Upon this a quantity of blood gushed out, so that the fire was extinguished, and all the multitude were astonished to see the difference thus providentially made between the unbelievers and the elect; of whom the admirable personage before us was doubtless one, in our age an apostolical and prophetic teacher, the bishop of the catholic church of Smyrna. For whatever he declared was fulfilled, and will be fulfilled. But the envious, malignant, and spiteful enemy of the just, observing the honour put on his martyrdom, and his blameless life, and knowing that he was now crowned with immortality, and the prize of unquestionable victory, studied to

* “An officer whose business it was in the Roman games to despatch any beast that was unruly or dangerous.”

prevent us from obtaining his body, though many of us longed to do it, and to communicate* with his sacred flesh. For some suggested to Nicetes, the father of Herod, and the brother of Alce,† to go to the proconsul, and entreat him not to deliver them the body, lest, say they, leaving the Crucified One, they should begin to worship him. And they said these things upon the suggestions and arguments of the Jews, who also watched us, when we were going to take his body from the pile; unacquainted indeed with our views, that it is not possible for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all who are saved of the human race, nor ever to worship any other.‡ For we adore him as being the Son of God; but we justly love the martyrs as disciples of the Lord, and followers of him, on account of that distinguished affection which they bore towards their King and their Teacher, and may we be ranked at last in their number! The centurion, perceiving the malevolence of the Jews, placed the body in the midst, and burnt it. Then we gathered up his bones, more precious than gold and jewels, and deposited them in a proper place; where, if it be possible, we shall meet, and the Lord will grant us, in gladness and joy, to celebrate the birth-day of his martyrdom, both in commemoration of those who have wrestled before us, and for the instruction and confirmation of those who

* "I see no ground for the well known papistical inference from hence of the virtues ascribed to relics. To express an affectionate regard to the deceased by a decent attention to the funeral rites, is all that is necessarily meant by the expression."

† "Alce is spoken of with honour in Ignatius' Epistle to the Smyrneans. She, it seems, had found, in her nearest relations, inveterate foes to whatever she held dear."

‡ "The faith of Christ, and a just honour paid to true Christians, abstracted from superstition and idolatry, appear in this passage."

come after.* Thus far concerning the blessed Polycarp. Eleven brethren from Philadelphia suffered with him, but he alone is particularly celebrated by all; even by Gentiles he is spoken of in every place. He was, in truth, not only an illustrious teacher, but also an eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, because it was regulated exactly by evangelical principles. For by patience he conquered the unjust magistrate, and thus receiving the crown of immortality, exulting with apostles and all the righteous, he glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord, even the Ruler of our bodies, and the Shepherd of his church dispersed through the world. You desired a full account; and we, for the present, have sent you a compendious one by our brother Mark. When you have read it, send it to the brethren beyond you, that they also may glorify the Lord, who makes selections from his own servants, who shall thus honour him by their deaths, and who not. To him who is able to conduct us all by his grace and free mercy into his heavenly kingdom, by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, to him be glory, honour, power, majesty, for ever. *Amen.* Salute all the saints; those with us salute you, particularly Evaristus, the writer, with all his house. He suffered martyrdom the second day of the month Xanthicus, the seventh day before the calends of March, on the great Sabbath, the eighth hour. He was apprehended by Herod, under Philip the Trallian pontifex, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, an eternal throne from age to age. We pray that you may be strong,

* "If we were in our times subject to such sufferings, I suspect these anniversary-martyrdoms of antiquity might be thought useful to us also. The superstition of after-times appears not, I think, in this Epistle."

brethren, walking in the word Jesus Christ, according to the gospel, with whom be glory to God, even the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of his elected saints, among whom the blessed Polycarp hath suffered martyrdom, with whom may we be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, having followed his steps!

“ ‘These things Caius hath transcribed from the copy of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who also lived with Irenæus. And I, Socrates of Corinth, have transcribed from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all. And I, Pionius, have transcribed from the fore-mentioned, having made search for it, and received the knowledge of it by a vision of Polycarp, as I shall shew in what follows, collecting it when now almost obsolete. So may the Lord Jesus Christ collect me with his elect, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. Amen.’ ”

CHAPTER XII.

Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne.

“THE flame* of Antoninus’s persecution reached a country which hitherto has afforded us no ecclesiastical materials; I mean that of France, in those times called Gallia. Two neighbouring cities, Vienne and Lyons, appear to have been much favoured with evangelical light and love. Vienne was an ancient Roman colony; Lyons was more modern, and her present bishop was Pothinus. His very name points him out to be a Grecian. Irenæus

* Euseb. iv. c. 1.

was a presbyter of Lyons, and seems to have been the author of the Epistle which Eusebius has preserved, and which the reader shall see presently. Other names concerned in the subject are evidently of Greek extraction, and it is hence most probable that some Asiatic Greeks had been the founders of these churches. Whoever casts his eye on a map of France, and sees the situation of Lyons, at present the largest and most populous city in that kingdom, next to Paris, may observe how favourable the confluence of the Rhine and the Soane, (anciently called the Arar,) on which it stands, is for the purposes of commerce.* The navigation of the Mediterranean, in all probability, was conducted by merchants of Lyons and of Smyrna, and hence the easy introduction of the gospel from the latter place and the other Asiatic churches is apparent. How much God had blessed the work in France, the accounts of their sufferings will evince. Lyons and Vienne appeared to be daughters, of whom their Asiatic mothers needed not to be ashamed.

The Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Brethren in Asia and Phrygia.†

“ ‘The servants of Christ, sojourning in Vienne and Lyons in France, to the brethren in Asia Propria and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption with us, peace, and grace, and glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

“ ‘We are not competent to describe with accuracy,

* “When will the moderns learn to connect navigation and commerce with the propagation of the gospel?”

† “Eusebius does not give the whole of the Epistle at length, but omits some parts and interrupts the thread of the narrative. It is not necessary to notice the particular instances.”

nor is it in our power to express the greatness of the affliction sustained here by the saints, the intense animosity of the heathen against them, and the complicated sufferings of the blessed martyrs. The grand enemy assaulted us with all his might, and by his first essays exhibited intentions of exercising malice without limits and without control. He left no method untried to habituate his slaves to his bloody work, and to prepare them by previous exercises against the servants of God. Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing in any houses, except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any place whatever. The grace of God, however, fought for us, preserving the weak and exposing the strong, who, like pillars, were able to withstand him in patience, and to draw the whole fury of the wicked against themselves. These entered into the contest, sustaining every species of pain and reproach. What was heavy to others, to them was light, while they were hastening to Christ, evincing indeed, that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us*. The first trial was from the people at large, shouts, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, casting of stones, and the confining them within their own houses, and all the indignities which may be expected from a fierce and outrageous multitude, these were magnanimously sustained. And now, being led into the forum by the tribune and the magistrates, they were examined before all the people, whether they were Christians, and, on pleading guilty, were shut up in prison till the arrival of the governor.* Be-

* "It is probable, but not quite certain, that this governor was Severus, afterwards emperor. The conduct of this governor was worthy of so inhuman a prince."

fore him they were at length brought, and he treated us with great savageness of manners. The spirit of Vettius Epagathus, one of the brethren, was roused, a man full of charity both to God and man, whose conduct was so exemplary, though but a youth, that he might justly be compared to old Zecharias; for he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, a man ever unwearied in acts of beneficence to his neighbours, full of zeal towards God, and fervent in spirit. He could not bear to see so manifest a perversion of justice; but, being moved with indignation, he demanded to be heard in behalf of the brethren, and pledged himself to prove that there was nothing atheistic or impious among them, those about the tribunal shouting against him, for he was a man of quality, and the governor being impatient of so equitable a demand, and only asking him if he were a Christian, and he confessing in the most open manner, the consequence was, that he was ranked among the martyrs. He was called, indeed, the advocate of the Christians; but he had an advocate* within, the Holy Spirit, more abundantly than Zecharias, which he demonstrated by the fulness of his charity, cheerfully laying down his life in defence of his brethren; for he was, and is still, a genuine disciple of Christ, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth † The rest began now to be distinguished. The capital martyrs appeared indeed ready for the

* "It is not easy to translate this, because of the ambiguous use of the term *Παρακλητον*, which signifies both a comforter and an advocate. Besides their only advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ, Christians have the comfort and power of his Spirit within."

† "Every man who reads this must see the iniquity and absurdity of the governor. A term of reproach stands in the room of argument. The name Christian has long ceased to be infamous. But the words Lollard, Puritan, Pietist, and Methodist, have supplied its place."

contest, and discharged their part with all alacrity of mind. Others appeared also unready, unexercised, and as yet weak, unable to sustain the shock of such a contest: of these, ten in number lapsed, whose case filled us with great grief and unmeasurable sorrow, and dejected the spirits of those who had not yet been apprehended, who, though they sustained all indignities, yet deserted not the martyrs in their distress. Then we were all much alarmed, because of the uncertain event of confession, not that we dreaded the torments with which we were threatened, but because we looked forward unto the end, and feared the danger of apostacy. Persons were now apprehended daily of such as were counted worthy to fill up the number of the lapsed, so that the most excellent were selected from the two churches, even those by whose labours they had been founded and established.* There were seized at the same time some of our heathen servants, (for the governor had openly ordered us all to be sought for,) who, by the impulse of Satan, fearing the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints, on the suggestion of the soldiers, accused us of eating human flesh, and of unnatural mixtures, and of things not fit even to be mentioned or imagined, and such as ought not to be believed of mankind.† These things being divulged, all were incensed even to madness against us; so that if some were formerly more moderate on account of any connexions of blood, affinity, or friendship, they were then transported beyond all bounds with indignation. Now it was that our Lord's word was fulfilled,

* "Hence I judge that their churches were of no great antiquity."

† "Here we see again the usual charge of unnatural crimes objected to the Christians, believed in the paroxysm of the persecution, but afterwards generally disclaimed by sober persons."

“The time will come when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” *The holy martyrs now sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description; Satan labouring, by means of them, to extort something slanderous to Christianity. The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers, was spent in a particular manner on Sanctus of Vienne, the deacon, and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler, and on Attalus of Pergamus, a man who had ever been the pillar and support of our church,† and on Blandina, through whom Christ shewed, that those things, that appear unsightly and contemptible among men, are most honourable in the presence of God, on account of love to his name, exhibited in real energy, and not boasting in pompous pretences. For while we all feared, and among the rest her mistress, according to the flesh, herself one of the noble army of martyrs, was afraid that she would not be able to witness a good confession, because of the weakness of her body, Blandina was endued with so much fortitude, that those who successively tortured her from morning to night, were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing, whilst her body was torn and laid open, and confessed that one species of torture had been sufficient to despatch her, much more so great a variety as had been applied. But the blessed woman, as a generous wrestler, recovered

* “Surely they needed much the aid of the Heavenly Comforter, promised in those discourses, to enable them to sustain the load of calumny so injurious and distressing.”

† “A farther confirmation of the idea that the gospel had been brought into France by the charitable zeal of the Asiatic Christians.”

fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident refreshment, support, and an annihilation of all her pains to say, "*I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us.*"

"In the mean time Sanctus having sustained, in a manner more than human, the most barbarous indignities, while the impious hoped to extort from him something injurious to the gospel, from the duration and intenseness of his sufferings, resisted with so much firmness, that he would neither tell his own name, nor that of his nation or state, nor whether he was a freeman or a slave; but to every interrogatory he answered in Latin, "*I am a Christian.*" This he repeatedly owned was to him both name, and state, and race, and every thing, and nothing else could the heathen draw from him. Hence the indignation of the governor and the torturers was fiercely levelled against him, so that having exhausted all the usual methods of torture, they at last fixed brazen plates to the most tender parts of his body. These were scorched of course, and yet he remained upright and inflexible, firm in his confession, being bedewed and refreshed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from the belly of Christ.* His body witnessed indeed the ghastly tortures which he had sustained, being one continued wound and bruise, altogether contracted, and no longer retaining the form of a human creature; in whom Christ suffering wrought great marvels, confounding the adversary, and shewing, for the encouragement of the rest, that nothing is to be feared

* "An illustrious testimony to the doctrine of the Spirit's influences, now so much depreciated, but which was then the support of suffering Christians. The illusion is to John, 7th chapter, 'He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And this spake he of the Spirit.'"

where the love of the Father is; nothing painful where the glory of Christ is exhibited. For while the impious imagined, when after some days they renewed his tortures, that a fresh application of the same methods of punishment to his wounds, now swollen and inflamed, must either overcome his constancy, or, by despatching him on the spot, strike a terror into the rest, as he could not even bear to be touched by the hand, this was so far from being the case, that contrary to all expectation, his body recovered its natural position in the second course of torture; he was restored to his former shape and the use of his limbs; so that, by the grace of Christ, it proved not a punishment, but a cure.

“ ‘ One of those who had denied Christ was Biblias. The devil, imagining that he had now devoured her, and desirous to augment her condemnation, by inducing her to accuse the Christians falsely, led her to the torture, compelling her to charge us with horrid impieties, as being a weak and timorous creature. But in her torture she recovered herself, and awoke as out of a deep sleep, being admonished by a temporary punishment of the danger of eternal fire in hell; and in opposition to the impious, she said, How can we eat infants, to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of beasts ?* And now she professed herself a Christian, and was added to the army of martyrs. The power of Christ exerted in the patience of his people, had now exhausted the usual artifices of torment, and the devil was driven to new resources. They were thrust into the darkest and most noisome parts

* “ Hence it appears that the eating of blood was not practised among the Christians of Lyons; and that they understood not Christian liberty in this point, will not be wondered at by those who consider the circumstances of the first Christians.”

of the prison; their feet were distended in a wooden trunk even to the fifth hole, and in this situation they suffered all the indignities which diabolical malice could inflict. Hence many of them were suffocated in prison, whom the Lord, shewing forth his own glory, was pleased thus to take to himself. The rest, though afflicted to such a degree, as to seem scarce capable of recovery under the kindest treatment, destitute as they were of all help and support, yet remained alive, strengthened by the Lord, and confirmed both in body and mind, encouraging and comforting the rest.

“ ‘ Some young persons who had been lately seized, and whose bodies had been unexercised with sufferings, unequal to the severity of the confinement, expired. The blessed Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm and asthmatic, yet strong in spirit, and panting after martyrdom, was dragged before the tribunal; his body worn out indeed with age and disease, yet he retained a soul through which Christ might triumph. Being borne by the soldiers to the tribunal, and attended by the magistrates and all the multitude, shouting against him as if he were Christ himself, he made a good confession. Being asked by the governor, who was the God of the Christians, he answered, If you be worthy, you shall know. He was then unmercifully haled about, and suffered variety of ill treatment; those who were near insulting him with hands and feet, without the least respect to his age; and those at a distance throwing at him whatever came to hand, every one looking upon himself as an offender, if he did not insult him some way or other. For thus they imagined they revenged the cause of their gods; and, scarce breathing, he was thrown into prison, and after two days expired.

“And here appeared a remarkable dispensation of Providence, and the immense compassion of Jesus, rarely exhibited indeed among the brethren, but not foreign to the character of Christ. For those who when first apprehended had denied, were themselves shut up in prison and suffered dreadful severities, as this denial of Christ availed them not. But those who confessed what they were, were imprisoned as Christians, abstracted from any other charge. These, as murderers and incestuous wretches, were punished much more than the rest; for the joy of martyrdom supported the latter, and the hope of the promises, and the love of Christ, and the Spirit of the Father. The former were oppressed with the pangs of guilt; so that, while they were dragged along, their very countenances distinguished them from the rest: For the faithful proceeded with cheerful steps; their countenances shining with much grace and glory; their bonds were as the most beautiful ornaments, and they looked as a bride adorned with her richest array, breathing the fragrance of Christ so much, that some thought they had been literally perfumed. But the others went on dejected, spiritless, and forlorn, and in every way disgraced, even insulted by the heathen as cowards and poltroons, and treated as murderers, and having lost the precious, the glorious, the soul-reviving appellation. The rest observing these things, were confirmed in the faith, confessed without hesitation on their being apprehended, nor admitted the diabolical suggestion for a moment.

“The martyrs were put to death in various ways: weaving a chaplet of various odours and flowers, they presented it to the Father. In truth, it became the wisdom and goodness of God to appoint that his servants, after enduring a great and variegated contest, should as victors re-

ceive the great crown of immortality. Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were led to the wild beasts into the amphitheatre, to the common spectacle of Gentile inhumanity.

“ ‘ One day of the shews being afforded to the people extraordinary on our account, Maturus and Sanctus again underwent various tortures in the amphitheatre, as if they had suffered nothing before. Thus were they treated like those wrestlers who, having conquered several times already, were obliged afresh to contend with other conquerors by fresh lots, till some one was conqueror of the whole number, and as such was crowned,* here they sustained again the blows usually inflicted on those who were condemned to wild beasts, as they were led to the amphitheatre; they were exposed to be dragged and torn by the beasts, and to all the barbarities which the mad populace with shouts exacted, and above all to the iron chair, by which their bodies being roasted, emitted a disagreeable smell. Nor was this all; the persecutors raged still more, if possible, to overcome their patience. But not a word could be extorted from Sanctus, besides what he first had uttered, the word of confession. These then remaining alive a long time, expired at length, being made a spectacle to the world, equivalent to all the variety usual in the fights of gladiators.

“ ‘ Blandina, suspended to a stake, was exposed as food to the wild beasts; who, because she was seen suspended in the form of a cross, employed in vehement supplication, inspired the combatants with much alacrity, while they beheld with their bodily eyes, in the person of

* “The allusions to the savage shews, so frequently made in this narrative, point out their frequency in these ferocious times, and give us occasion to reflect on the mild appearances which society has assumed, since even the form of Christianity has prevailed in the world.”

their sister, Him who was crucified for them, that he might persuade those who believe in him, that every one who suffers for the glory of Christ always has communion with the living God; and none of the beasts at that time touching her, she was taken down from the stake, thrown again into prison, and reserved for a future contest; that having overcome in various exercises, she might fully condemn the old serpent, and fire the brethren with a noble spirit of Christian emulation, weak and contemptible as she might be deemed, yet clothed with Christ the mighty and invincible champion, victorious over the enemy in a variety of rencounters, and crowned with immortality.

“ ‘Attalus, also, was vehemently demanded by the multitude; for he was a person of great reputation among us; and he advanced in all the cheerfulness and serenity of a good conscience, an experienced Christian, and ever ready and active in bearing testimony to the truth, being led round the amphitheatre, and a tablet being carried before him, inscribed in Latin, “*This is Attalus the Christian.*” The rage of the people would have had him despatched immediately; but the governor understanding that he was a Roman, ordered him back to prison, and concerning him and others, who could plead the same privilege of Roman citizenship, he wrote to the emperor, and waited for his instructions.

“ ‘The interval which this circumstance occasioned was not unfruitful to the church, the unbounded compassion of Christ appeared in their patience, the dead members were restored to life by the means of the living, and the martyrs became singularly serviceable to the lapsed, and the church rejoiced to receive her sons returning to her bosom; for by their means most of those who had denied

Christ were recovered, and dared to profess the Saviour; and feeling again the divine life in their souls, they approached to the tribunal; and that God who willeth not the death of a sinner being again precious to their souls, they desired a fresh opportunity of being interrogated by the governor.

“ ‘Cæsar* sent orders that the confessors should be put to death, and the apostates dismissed. It was now the general assembly, held annually at Lyons, frequented from all parts, and this was the time when the Christian prisoners were again exposed to the populace. The governor again interrogated; Roman citizens had the privilege of dying by decollation, the rest were exposed to wild beasts, and now it was that our Redeemer was magnified in those who had apostatized. They were interrogated separate from the rest, as persons soon to be dismissed, and made a confession to the surprise of the Gentiles, and were added to the list of martyrs. A small number still remained in apostacy, but they were those who possessed not the least spark of divine faith, or had the least acquaintance with the riches of Christ in their souls, and had no fear of God before their eyes, whose life had brought reproach on Christianity, and had evidenced them to be the children of perdition;† but all the rest were added to the church.

* “It must be confessed that the power of stoicism in hardening the heart was never more strongly illustrated than in the case of Marcus Antoninus, thus breaking all the rights of Roman citizenship, and all the feelings of humanity. It puts me in mind of Mr. Pope’s lines,

In lazy apathy let stoics boast

Their virtue fix’d—’tis fix’d as in a frost.”

† “The difference between true and merely professing Christians is well stated, and deserves to be noticed. A season of persecution separates real believers and real experienced Christians from others, much more visibly than ministers can now do by the most judicious distinctions.”

“ ‘During their examination, one Alexander, a Phrygian by nation, a physician by profession, a man who had lived many years in France, and was generally known for his love of God and zealous regard for divine truth, a person of apostolical endowments, and standing near the tribunal, and by his gestures encouraging them to profess the faith, appeared to all who surrounded the tribunal as one who travailed in pain on their account. And now the multitude, incensed at the Christian integrity at length exhibited by the lapsed, made a clamour against Alexander as the cause of this change. And the governor placed him before him, and asking him who he was, and he declaring that he was a Christian, the former, in a passion, condemned him to the wild beasts; and the day after he was introduced with Attalus. For the governor, willing to gratify the people, delivered him again to the wild beasts, which two having undergone all the usual methods of torture in the amphitheatre, and sustained a very grievous conflict, at length expired. Alexander neither groaned nor spake a word, but in his heart conversed with God. Attalus, sitting on the iron chair, and being scorched, when the smell issued from him, said to the multitude in Latin, “ *This indeed which you do is to devour men; but we devour not our fellow-creatures, nor practice any other wickedness.*” Being asked what is the name of God, he answered, God has not a name as men have.

“ ‘On the last day of the spectacles, Blandina was again introduced with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen; they had been daily brought in to see the punishment of the rest. They were ordered to swear by their idols; and the mob perceiving them to persevere immoveably, and to treat their menaces with superior contempt, was incensed, and no pity was shewn to the sex of the one or the ten-

der age of the other. Their tortures were now aggravated by all sorts of methods, and the whole round of barbarities was inflicted; but menaces and punishments were equally ineffectual. Ponticus, animated by his sister, who was observed by the heathen to strengthen and confirm him, after a magnanimous exertion of patience, yielded up the ghost.

“ ‘And now the blessed Blandina, last of all, as a generous mother having exhorted her children, and sent them before her victorious to the king, reviewing the whole series of their sufferings, hastened to undergo the same herself, rejoicing and triumphing in her exit, as if invited to a marriage supper, not exposed to wild beasts. After she had endured stripes, the tearing of the beasts, and the iron chair, she was enclosed in a net, and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, and being quite superior to her pains, through the influence of hope, and the realizing view of the objects of her faith and her fellowship with Christ, she at length breathed out her soul. Even her enemies confessed that no woman among them had ever suffered such and so great things. But their madness against the saints was not yet satiated. For the fierce and savage tribes of men being instigated by the ferocious enemy of mankind, were not easily softened; and they now began another peculiar war against the bodies of the saints. That they had been conquered by their patience, gave them no stings of remorse; even the feelings of common sense and humanity being extinguished among them. Their disappointment increased their fury. The devil, the governor and the mob equally showed their malice, that the scripture might be fulfilled, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still,” as well as, “He that is holy, let him be

holy still;”* for they exposed to dogs the bodies of those who had been suffocated in prison, carefully watching night and day, lest any of our people should perform funeral rites for them by stealth. And then exposing what had been left by the wild beasts, or by the fire, relics partly torn, and partly scorched, and the heads with the trunks, they preserved them unburied some days by military guards. Some gnashed on them with their teeth, desirous, if possible, to make them feel still more of their malice. Others laughed and insulted, praising their gods, and ascribing their vengeance inflicted on the martyrs to them. All were not, however, of this ferocious mould. Some of a gentler spirit, who sympathized with us in some degree, could not, however, avoid upbraiding us, often saying, Where is their God, and what profit do they derive from their religion, which they valued above life itself? So various were the agitations of mind among them.†

“ ‘ As for ourselves, our sorrow was great, because we were deprived of the pleasure of interring our friends. Neither the darkness of the night could befriend us, nor could we prevail by prayers or by price. They watched the bodies with unremitting vigilance, as if to deprive them of sepulchre was to them an object of great importance. The bodies of the martyrs having been contumeliously treated and exposed for six days, were burnt and reduced to ashes, and scattered by the wicked into the Rhone, that not the least particle of them might appear on the earth any more. And they did these things

* “Rev. xxii. 11. A striking proof of the sacred regard paid to that divine work in the second century.”

† “See here the diversity of men’s conduct, flowing from the natural diversity of men’s tempers or education, while all are yet equally void of the fear and love of God.”

as if they could prevail against God, and prevent their resurrection, to deter others, as they said, from the hope of a future life, on which relying they introduce a strange and new religion, and despise the most excruciating tortures, and die with joy. "Now let us see if they will rise again, and if their God can help them and deliver them out of our hands."*

"Eusebius observes here, that the reader may judge by analogy of the fierceness of this persecution in other parts of the empire, from this detail of the affairs at Lyons; and then adds something from the Epistle concerning the humility, meekness, and charity of the martyrs, which he contrasts with the unrelenting spirit of the Novatians, which afterwards appeared in the church. "They were such sincere followers of Christ, *who, though he was in the form of a man, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,*" that though elevated to such height of glory, and though they had borne witness for Christ not once or twice only, but often, in a variety of sufferings, yet they assumed not the venerable name of martyrs, nor permitted us to address them as such. But if any of us by letter or word gave them the title, they reproved us vehemently. For it was with much pleasure that they gave the appellation in a peculiar sense to Him who is the *faithful and true witness*, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of divine life. And they remembered with respect the deceased martyrs, and said, they indeed were martyrs whom Christ hath deigned to receive to himself in their confession, sealing their testimony by

* "The natural enmity of the human mind against the things of God was never more strongly exemplified than in this persecution. The folly of thinking to defeat the counsels of God appears most conspicuous; and so does the faith and hope of a blessed resurrection, the peculiarly animating theme of true Christians."

their exit, but we are low and mean confessors. With tears they intreated the brethren to pray fervently for them, that they might be perfected. The energy, however, of the character of martyrs they exhibited in real facts, answering with much boldness to the Gentiles; and their magnanimity, undaunted, calm, and intrepid, was visible to all the world, though the fear of God induced them to refuse the title of martyrs. They humbled themselves under the mighty hand by which they are now exalted.* They were ready to give a modest reason of the hope that was in them before all; they accused none; they took pleasure in commending, none in censuring, and they prayed for their murderers, as Stephen the accomplished martyr did, ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’ And if he prayed thus for those who stoned him, how much more for the brethren? This was indeed their ambition, that, by the genuine solidity of their charity, the malignant dragon being suffocated, might be obliged to disgorge himself of those alive and unhurt, whom he thought he had devoured. Nor did they glory over the lapsed; they supplied their weaknesses with maternal tenderness, and shed many tears over them to the Father; they asked life for them, and he gave them it, which they were glad to communicate to their neighbours, in all things coming off victorious before God, ever cultivating peace, ever commending peace, in peace they went to God, not leaving trouble to their mother, the church, nor faction and sedition to the brethren, but joy, peace, unanimity, and charity.’”

* 1 Pet. v.

CHAPTER XIII.

Eminent Men.

AN eminent writer of this period was *Ægesippus*, a converted Jew, who went to Rome while *Anicetus* was bishop of that city, and lived until *Eleutherus* succeeded. He is the first uninspired historian of the church of whom we have any account. He relates the martyrdom of *St. James*, bishop of Jerusalem, and of *Simeon* who succeeded him, also speaks of a certain heretic named *Thebutis*, who, he says, was the first that rent the church with his errors, "being incensed that he was not made a bishop." In describing his journey to Rome he mentions passing through Corinth, and seeing *Primus*, the bishop of that city, with whom he "abode many days." Having lived through the period of the Antonines he died in the reign of *Commodus*.

"*Melito*, bishop of *Sardis*, from the very little of his remains that are extant, may be conceived to be one whom God might make use of for the revival of godliness in that drooping church. The very titles of some of his works excite our regret for the loss of them. One of them is on the submission of the senses to faith; another on the soul, the body, and the spirit; another on God incarnate. A fragment of his, preserved by the author of the *Chronicle*, called the *Alexandrian*, says, that the Christians do not adore insensible stones, but that they worship one God alone, who is before all things and in all things, and *Jesus Christ* who is God before all ages. He lived under the reign of *Marcus Antoninus*. His unsuccessful but masterly *Apology* presented to that empe-

ror, was before taken notice of. He travelled into the east on purpose to collect authentic ecclesiastical information, and gives us a catalogue of the sacred books of the Old Testament. He died and was buried at Sardis; a man whom Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, his contemporary, calls an eunuch, that is, one who made himself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake.* Several such, I apprehend, were in the primitive times. But the depravity of human nature is ever pushing men into extremes on the right hand and on the left. There soon arose some who made a self-righteous use of these instances of self-denial, and clogged them with unwarrantable excesses. The contrary extreme is now so prevalent, that for a man to follow the example of Melito on the same generous principles which our Saviour expresses, would be thought very extraordinary, and even ridiculous. But whatever has the sanction of holy writ, should be observed to the honour of those who practise it, whether agreeable to the taste of the age we live in or not, unless we mean to set up the eighteenth century as a pope to judge the foregoing seventeen. The same Polycrates observes of him, that his actions were regulated by the motions of the Holy Ghost, and that he lies interred at Sardis, where he expects the judgment and resurrection."

In one of the fragments of Melito, preserved by Eusebius, he makes mention of Sagaris, bishop of Laodicea, who suffered martyrdom. He also attributes the temporal prosperity of the Roman empire to the diffusion of the Gospel. He speaks of Christ, not only as God, before all ages, but also as the Word.

Another writer of eminence, Bardasanes, of Mesopotamia, a man renowned for learning and eloquence, though

* Matthew xix. Euseb. b. 4. ch. 22. Dupin and Cave.

not without error, gives the following testimony to the "great progress and deep energy of Christianity."

"'In Parthia,' says he, 'polygamy is allowed and practised, but the Christians of Parthia practise it not. In Persia the same may be said with respect to incest. In Bactria and in Gaul the rights of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Christians there act not thus. In truth, wherever they reside, they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws and the worst of customs.' This eulogium is not more strong than just; and the influence of God, in supporting his own truth and his own religion, appeared by such fruits as no other religion or philosophy could ever show.

"Miltiades was usefully engaged in discriminating the genuine influences of the Holy Spirit from the fictitious, of which unhappy instances had then appeared. False prophets evinced the most stupid ignorance in the beginning, in the end a distempered imagination and furious frenzy. Miltiades shewed that the influence of the Holy Spirit, described in scripture, was sober, consistent, reasonable, of a quite different cast and genius. There is no new thing under the sun; impostures and delusions exist at this day, and why should it not be thought as reasonable now to discriminate genuine from fictitious or diabolical influences, by laying down the true marks and evidences of each, instead of scornfully treating all alike as enthusiastic? The extraordinary and miraculous influences come chiefly under Miltiades' inspection; they were at that time very common in the Christian church; and delusive pretences, particularly those of Montanus and his followers, were common also. The discerning reader will know how to apply these things to our own times."

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, was eminent in labours. "He not only," says Eusebius, "took care of his own flock, but he also made the Christians of other countries partakers of his divine labours, causing them to fructify every where by his Catholic epistles, which he sent to many churches. The first is written to the Lacedæmonians, containing an instruction of the Catholic faith, and an exhortation to peace and unity. The second is directed to the Athenians, to excite their faith, and to induce them to lead a life conformable to the rules of the gospel. He likewise reproves their negligence, whereby they had almost abandoned the Christian religion ever since their bishop Publius suffered martyrdom in the persecutions that were raised in his time: Moreover he mentions Quadratus, who was elected bishop of Athens after the martyrdom of Publius, and testifies, that the Christians of this city owed the renovation of the ardour of their faith to his care. Besides this, he informs us, that Dionysius, the Æreopagite, being converted by St. Paul, (as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles,) was constituted the first bishop of Athens. There is also another epistle written by him to the Nicomedians, wherein he confutes the heresy of Marcion, and keeps close to the rule of faith. He likewise composed a letter directed to the church of Gortyna; as also to all those of Crete, in which he extremely commends Philip their bishop, to whom his whole church had given authentic testimonies of his singular abilities and generosity, and he admonisheth them to avoid heresies. In his epistle to the Amasrians, and to the other churches of Pontus, addressing his discourse to their bishop Palma, he explains divers passages of the Holy Scriptures; he therein lays down several precepts concerning marriage and chastity, deter-

mining at the same time, that all penitents should be received that returned from any crimes whatsoever, and even from heresy. In the same volume is contained another epistle to the Gnessians, wherein he adviseth Pinytus their bishop not to impose on the Christians the heavy burden of the obligation to preserve their virginity, but to have respect unto the weakness which is incident to most of them. Pinytus in replying to this epistle, extols and admires Dionysius of Corinth, and exhorts him at last to afford them more solid nourishment, and to send frequent letters to him which might fill and satiate the people that were committed to his charge, lest being always nourished only with milk, they should grow old, and yet remain in a kind of infancy. This answer represents as it were a lively portraiture of the faith of Pinytus, his diligence in watching over the flock, with which he was entrusted by God, his profound knowledge in divinity, and his extraordinary eloquence. We have also in our hand another letter of Dionysius written to the Romans, and particularly directed to Soter, who was then their bishop; a passage whereof it will be expedient here to produce, in which he recommends to them the continuation of a certain custom, that had been always observed by them from their first plantation unto the persecution which happened in our time. ‘This is,’ says he, ‘a custom which hath been established among you, O ye Romans, ever since the beginning of your church, to be charitable unto your brethren, and to send to divers churches throughout the world things necessary for their subsistence; you comfort the poor in their indigence, and relieve the urgent necessities of those that are condemned to the mines; this custom you have received from your ancestors, which the blessed bishop Soter hath not only

retained, but even augmented, by abundantly distributing the donatives appointed for the relief of the faithful, and cherishing as a father would do his children all the brethren who came to Rome.' He mentions St. Clement's epistle to the Corinthians, which had been for a long time constantly read in the church of Corinth, as he testifies in these words. 'We have even now passed the Lord's day, when we perused your epistle, which we shall hereafter read continually, as we do that of St. Clement, that we may be replenished with precepts and wholesome instructions.' Afterwards he observes, that his letters were corrupted by falsifiers in these words: 'I wrote several epistles at the entreaty of the brethren, but the ministers of the devil have filled them with tares, by retrenching and adding many things; they may well expect this terrible sentence: Cursed be he that adds or diminisheth any thing from my words. Wherefore it is not to be admired, that some have presumed even to corrupt the sacred writings, since they have done it in books of much less authority.' Besides these epistles, there is another extant, written to Chrysophora his faithful sister, to whom he gave instructions suitable, carefully nourishing her with spiritual food. These are the contents of this passage of Eusebius, concerning the epistles of St. Dionysius, which I have set down entire, because he hath made use of the same method as we should have done, in case those epistles had been still extant.

"Moreover Eusebius, in his 2d book, chap. 25, recites another fragment of his epistle to the Romans, wherein it mentioned the death of St. Peter, in the city of Rome, in these words. 'Thus' (says he) 'as I may so say, by your exhortations you have mixed the grain that sprung from the seed of St. Peter and St. Paul, that is to say,

the Romans and the Corinthians: for these two glorious apostles entering into our city of Corinth, instructed us in dispersing the spiritual seed of the gospel, afterwards they passed together into Italy, and having given you also the like instructions, they suffered martyrdom with you at the same time.' This is all that we certainly know concerning the life and writings of Dionysius bishop of Corinth."

It is evident that discipline was maintained in the churches with appropriate strictness, and that those who inherited the ecclesiastical office of the apostles were anxious to repress the first risings of monastic austerity.

"Theophilus of Antioch is a person of whom it were to be wished that we had a larger account. He was brought up a Gentile, educated in all the knowledge which was then reputable in the world, and was doubtless a man of considerable parts and learning. His conversion to Christianity seems to have been the most reasonable in the world. The Holy Spirit in his operations ever appears to adapt himself much to the different tempers of the subjects of them. Theophilus was a reasoner, and the grace of God, while it convinced him of his inability to work himself out of his doubts, effectually instructed his understanding. The belief of a resurrection seems to have been a mighty impediment to his reception of the gospel. What is called philosophy varies in different ages. Such an objection to Christianity would scarce now be made; but philosophy ever fails not, in some form or other, to withstand the religion of Jesus.

"Of his labours in his bishopric of Antioch we have no account. He carried on a correspondence with a learned man, Autolycus, with what success in the end we are not told. He appears also to have been very vigilant

against fashionable heresies. He sat thirteen years in his bishopric, and died in peace about the second or third year of Commodus.*

Athenagoras, originally an Athenian philosopher, presented, as we have already mentioned, an apology to Marcus. He refutes the calunnies against the Christians, proves that they were not atheists, saying "they acknowledge and adore one God in three persons." He speaks of the doctrine of the Trinity as one who conceives it of the utmost consequence to practical godliness.

"He describes Christians as men that made small account of the present life, but were intent only upon contemplating God, and knowing his Word, who is from him, what union the Son has with the Father, what communion the Father has with the Son, what the Spirit is, and what the union and distinction are of such so united, the Spirit, the Son and the Father.

"If this is true (and Athenagoras may well be credited for the fact) it is not to be wondered at, that the primitive Christians were so anxiously tenacious of the doctrine. It was the climate in which alone Christian fruit could grow. Their speculations were not merely abstracted. They found in the view of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, something of energy to raise them from earth to heaven. This could be nothing else than the peculiar truths of the gospel, which are so closely interwoven with the doctrine of the Trinity. The right use of the doctrine is briefly, but strongly intimated in the passage, and the connexion between Christian principles and practice appears. In truth, a Trinitarian speculatist may be as worldly-minded as any other. His doctrine,

* Euseb. b. 4. ch. 23, and Cave's Life of Theophilus.

however, contains that which alone can make a man otherwise."

Beside these, there were others of piety and talent, eminent in their vocation—indeed we may suppose a host; but of those whose names have been handed down to us many remain deserving of notice. Pinytus, bishop of Gnossius, wrote with learning and eloquence; Philippus, bishop of Gortyna, published a treatise against Marcion.

Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, being crowned with martyrdom, after having discharged the duties of his station eleven years, Hyginus succeeded him. "After the fourth year of Hyginus was expired, Pius took the public ministry of the church of Rome. After the death of Pius, who departed the fifteenth year, Anicetus succeeded." In the eighth year of Marcus, after Anicetus had occupied the episcopal chair eleven years, Soter was made bishop.

At Alexandria, after Eumenes had ruled the church thirteen years, Mark was chosen in his place; ten years more having transpired, Celadion was made bishop; and, continues the primitive historian, Eusebius, after Celadion had governed fourteen years, Agrippas came in place.

"In the church of Antioch, Theophilus was the sixth from the apostles, Heros the fifth, Cornelius the fourth."

CHAPTER XIV.

Commodus.

THE honours of this world are evidently of little value in the eye of the Almighty. He permits them to be en-

joyed by such weak, and, sometimes, by such brutal beings, as are a by-word among nations. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," certainly then do not become us. Our anxieties ought to be fastened on nobler objects. If wealth and temporal distinction were the choicest gifts, we should not see them in the possession of a Nero or a Marcus Aurelius:—we should not see an Ignatius and a Polycarp suffering while a heathen is emperor.

Of all the tyrants that have disgraced the human form, Commodus, who in the year 180 succeeded to the government of the world, was the most gratuitously savage. His father, Antoninus, saw him married, and recommended him to his friends, intreating them to aid him with advice; but no sooner was the monster on the throne, than he gave loose to the appetites of a wild beast.

And yet this man, who slew his subjects for amusement, was, by the overruling power of Providence, made to allow the Christians a respite. So true is it that the hearts of all are in the hands of God, and that none have any reason to fear who are under his protection.

The means made use of to check the torrent of persecution were as strange as the fact of its being checked under such a man as Commodus. Marcia, a woman of low rank, was his favourite, and she, on some account not now known, had a predilection for the Christians. Whatever was the cause—whether the members of her family being believers, or her having received some early impression—she used her influence with Commodus in behalf of the disciples.

"The church of Christ is as abhorrent in its plan and spirit from moral philosophers as from debauchees, and though friendly to every thing virtuous and laudable in

society, has a taste peculiarly its own. And the power and goodness of God, in making even such wretched characters as Commodus and Marcia to stem the torrent of persecution, and to afford a breathing time of twelve years under the son, after eighteen years of the most cruel sufferings under the father, deserve to be remarked. The gospel now flourished abundantly, and many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced it. Such a circumstance would naturally excite the envy of the great. The Roman senate felt its dignity defiled by innovations, which to them appeared to the last degree contemptible, and to this malignant source, I think, is to be ascribed the only instance of persecution in this reign.

“Apollonius, a person renowned for learning and philosophy at that time in Rome, was a sincere Christian, and as a Christian was accused by an informer before Perennis the judge, a person of considerable influence in the reign of Commodus. The law of Antoninus Pius had enacted grievous punishments against the accusers of Christians. One cannot suppose his edict had any force during the reign of his successor, but under Commodus it was revived, or rather a new one still more severe was enacted, that the accusers should be put to death.* Perennis sentenced the accuser accordingly, and his legs were broken. Thus far he seems to have obeyed the dictates of the law; in what follows he obeyed the dictates of his own malice, or rather that of the senate. He begged of the prisoner with much earnestness, that he would give an account of his faith before the senate and the court. Apollonius complied, and delivered an apology for Christianity; in consequence of which, by a decree of the senate, he was beheaded. It is not quite

* Euseb. *ibid.*

easy to account for this procedure. It is perhaps the only trial we read of in which both accuser and accused suffered judicially. Eusebius observes, that the laws were still in force, commanding Christians to be put to death who had been presented before the tribunal. But Adrian, or certainly Antoninus Pius, had abrogated this iniquitous edict of Trajan. Under Marcus it might be revived, as what cruelty against Christians might not be expected under him? Now Commodus, by menacing persecutors with death, might suppose he had sufficiently secured the Christians. Yet, if a formal abrogation of the law against Christians had been neglected, one may see how Apollonius came to suffer as well as his adversary. In truth, had he been silent, he probably had saved his life. Insidious artifices, under the pretence of much respect and desire of information, seem to have drawn him into a measure which cost him his life. However he died in a cause able to bear him out even beyond the limits of time!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE heresies of the second century were neither numerous nor important. "A denial of the deity of Christ could not find any patron within the pale of the church for the first two hundred years."

"Eusebius, speaking of the books which were published in these times, observes,* 'Among them there is found a volume written against the heresy of Artemon, which Paulus of Samosata in our days endeavoured to

* B. 5. ch. 23

revive.' When this book had confuted the said presumptuous heresy, which affirmed Christ to be a mere man, and that this was an ancient opinion, after many leaves tending to the confutation of this blasphemous falsehood, he writes thus: 'They affirm that all our ancestors, even the apostles themselves, were of that opinion, and taught the same with them, and that this their true doctrine was preached and embraced to the time of Victor, the 13th bishop of Rome after Peter, and was corrupted by his successor, Zephyrinus. This might carry a plausible appearance of truth, were it not first contradicted by the Holy Scriptures, next by the books of several persons long before the time of Victor, which they published against the Gentiles in the defence of the truth, and in confutation of the heresies of their time. I mean Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, and Clement, with many others, in all which works Christ is preached and published to be God. Who knoweth not that the works of Irenæus, Melito, and all other Christians do confess Christ to be both God and Man? In fine, how many psalms, and hymns, and canticles were written from the beginning by faithful Christians, which celebrate Christ, the Word of God, as no other than God indeed? How then is it possible, according to their report, that our ancestors, to the time of Victor, should have preached so, when the creed of the church for so many years is pronounced as certain, and known to all the world? And ought they not to be ashamed to report such falsehoods of Victor, when they know it to be a fact, that this very Victor excommunicated Theodotus, a tanner, the father of this apostacy, who denied the divinity of Christ, because he first affirmed Christ to be only man. If Victor, as they report, had been of their blasphemous sentiments, how could

he have excommunicated Theodotus the author of the heresy?"

"Victor's government was about the close of the second century. The anonymous author before us writes most probably in the former part of the third. Nor is his testimony much invalidated by his being anonymous. The facts to which he speaks were notorious and undeniable.

"This Theodotus was a citizen of Byzantium, a tanner, but a man of parts and learning. Heretical perversions of scripture have often been invented by such persons, and pride and self-conceit seem to have a peculiar ascendancy over men who have acquired their knowledge in private by their own industry: one of the best advantages of public seminaries being undoubtedly this, that modesty and reasonable submission are learnt in them, and men, by seeing and feeling their own inferiority, are taught to think more lowly of their own attainments. This self-taught currier speculated, felt himself important enough to dare to be singular, and revived the heresy of Ebion. He was brought with some other Christians before persecuting magistrates. His companions honestly confessed Christ, and suffered. He was the only man of the company who denied him. In truth, he had no principles strong enough to induce him to bear the cross of Christ. Theodotus lived still a denier of Christ, and being afterwards upbraided for denying his God, No, says he, I have not denied God, but man, for Christ is no more.* His heresy hence obtained a new name, that of the God-denying apostacy.†

"The church was internally shaken and much dis-

* Damascen. Heres. 54.

† ἀρνησιθεος ἀποστασία.

figured by the heresy of Montanus. This is the account of it given by Apollinaris of Hierapolis, who took pains to confute it.* ‘Being lately at Ancyra in Galacia, I found the church throughout filled, not with prophets, as they call them, but with false prophets, where, with the help of the Lord, I disputed in the church for many days against them, so that the church rejoiced and was confirmed in the truth, the adversaries were vexed and murmured. The original of them was this: There is a village in Mysia, a region of Phrygia, called Ardaba, where we are told that Montanus, a late convert in the time of Gratus, proconsul of Asia, elated with ambition, gave advantage to Satan against him. The man behaved in a frantic manner, and pretended to prophecy. Some who heard him, checked him as a lunatic, and forbad his public exhibitions, mindful of our Saviour’s predictions and warnings against false prophets; others boasted of him as endued with the Holy Ghost, and forgetting the divine admonitions, were ensnared by his arts and encouraged his imposture. Two women were by Satan possessed of the same spirit, and spake foolish and fanatical things. They gloried in their own supposed superior sanctity and happiness, and were deluded with the most flattering expectations. Few of the Phrygians were seduced, though they took upon them to revile every church under heaven which did not pay homage to their pretended inspirations. The faithful throughout Asia in frequent synods examined and condemned the heresy.’

“It has ever been one of the greatest trials to men really led by the Spirit of God, besides the open opposition of the profane, to be obliged to encounter the subtle

* Euseb. b. 5. ch. 14.

devices of Satan in raising up pretended illuminations, which, by their folly, and wickedness, and self-conceit, expose godliness to contempt. The marks of distinction are plain to serious minds and those of tolerable judgment and discretion, but men void of the fear of God will not distinguish. We see here an instance of what has often been repeated from that day to the present in the church of Christ, and real Christians did then, what ought always to be done now, examine, expose, condemn, and separate themselves from such delusions, while enthusiasts, of every age, in folly, pride, and uncharitableness, have followed the pattern of Montanus. Nothing happened here but what is foretold in scripture, and is in truth so common a concomitant of the real work of God, that wherever it appears, there this appears also."

"And here we shut up the view of the second century, which, for the most part, exhibited proofs of divine grace as strong, or nearly so, as the first. We have seen the same unshaken and simple faith of Jesus, the same love of God and of the brethren, and that in which they singularly excelled modern Christians, the same heavenly spirit and victory over the world. But a dark shade is enveloping these divine glories. The spirit of God is grieved already by the ambitious intrusions of self-righteousness, argumentative refinements, and pharisaic pride; and though it be more common to represent the most sensible decay of godliness as commencing a century later, to me it seems already begun. Yet the effects of the first outpouring of the Spirit, and some rich communications of the same Spirit will appear in the third century."

Third Century.

CHAPTER I.

Irenæus.

“BEFORE we proceed with the orderly course of events in this century, it may be convenient to continue the account of authors belonging to the last, whose deaths happened within this. We meet with four celebrated men of this description; Irenæus, Tertullian, Pantæus, and Clement of Alexandria.

“Of Irenæus it were to be wished we had a more copious account. The place of his birth is quite uncertain. His name, however, points him out to be a Grecian. His instructors in Christianity were Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, and the renowned Polycarp. The former is generally allowed to have been a man of real sanctity, but of slender capacity. He, as well as Polycarp, had been a disciple of St. John, and with all the imbecility of judgment which is ascribed to him, might, under God, have been of signal service to Irenæus. But the instructions of Polycarp seem to have made the deepest impressions on his mind from early life.

“The church of Lyons, we have seen, was a daughter of the church of Smyrna, or of the other neighbouring churches. Pothinus must have been a Greek as well as Irenæus; who as presbyter assisted the venerable prelate in his old age. His concern in writing the account of the martyrdoms of Lyons has been already mentioned. After the death of Pothinus, about the year 169, he succeeded him. Never was any pastor more severely tried by a

tempestuous scene. Violent persecution without, and subtile heresies within, called for the exertion, at once, of consummate dexterity and of magnanimous resolution. Irenæus was favoured with a large measure of both, and weathered out the storm. But heresy proved a more constant enemy than persecution. The multiplication of it in endless refinements induced him to write his book against heresies, which must have been at that time a very seasonable work."

"The beginning of the third century was marked with the persecution under Septimius Severus, the successor of Julian. He himself had most probably directed the persecution at Lyons, in which Pothinus suffered, and when he began to persecute as emperor, he would naturally recall the idea of Lyons, and of the persecution in which he had so large a share.* Gregory of Tours, and the ancient martyrologists inform us, that after several torments Irenæus was put to death, and together with him almost all the Christians of that populous city, whose numbers could not be reckoned, so that the streets of Lyons flowed with the blood of Christians."

"The labours of Irenæus in Gaul were doubtless of the most solid utility. Nor is it a small instance of the humility and charity of this great man, accurately versed as he was in Grecian literature, that he took pains to learn the barbarous dialect of Gaul, conformed himself to the rustic manners of an illiterate people, and renounced the politeness and elegant traits of his own country, for the love of souls. Rare fruit of Christian charity!"

"He makes a strong use of the argument of tradition in support of the apostolical doctrine against the novel

* Cave's Life of Irenæus.

heresies. His acquaintance with primitive Christians gave him a great right to press this argument, and the force of it in a certain degree is obvious. The papists have perverted these declarations of his into an argument in favour of their church. But what may not men pervert and abuse? The reasonable use of tradition, as a collateral proof of Christian doctrines, is not hence invalidated. What he observes here concerning the barbarous nations is remarkable.* ‘If there was any doubt concerning the least article, ought we not to have recourse to the most ancient churches where the apostles lived? But what would it signify if the apostles had left us no writings? Ought we not to follow the tradition which they left to those with whom they committed the care of the churches? It is what several barbarous nations observe, who believe in Jesus without paper or ink, having the doctrine of salvation written on their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and faithfully keeping up to ancient tradition concerning one God the Creator and his Son Jesus Christ. Those who have received this faith without scripture, are barbarians as to their manner of speaking, compared with us; but as to their sentiments and behaviour, they are very wise and very agreeable to God, persevering in the practice of justice and charity. And if any one should preach to them in their language, what the heretics have invented, they would immediately stop their ears and flee far off, and would not even hear those blasphemies.’

“Thus it appears that to the illiterate barbarians tradition, though a poor substitute, supplied the place of the written word. We may not, however, suppose that their

* B. 3. ch. 4.—See Fleury’s Church History on the subject of the Works of the Fathers, vol. i. b. 4.

faith was blind and implicit. Our author gives a strong testimony to their godliness, and those of them who were taught indeed of God would have in themselves the strongest and most reasonable of all proofs of the divinity of their religion. Of the Holy Spirit's influences, and of the native energy of divine truth on the hearts and lives of very illiterate men, we seem to have here a very valuable testimony.

"There is no new thing under the sun; the artifices of the Valentinians in alluring men to their communion are specimens of the wiles of heretics in all ages.* 'In public they use alluring discourses, because of the common Christians, as they call those who wear the Christian name in general; and to entice them to come often, they pretend to preach like us; and complain that though their doctrine be the same as ours, we abstain from their communion, and call them heretics. When they have seduced any from the faith by their disputes, and made them willing to comply with them, they began to open their mysteries.'"

"The use of the mystic union between the godhead and manhood of Christ in the work of redemption, and in general the *fall* and the *recovery*, are scarce held out more instructively by any writer of antiquity. The learned reader, who has a taste for what is peculiarly Christian, will not be displeased to see a few quotations.†

"'He united man to God; for if man had not overcome the adversary of man, the enemy could not have been legally conquered. And again, if God had not granted salvation, we should not have been put into firm possession of it; and if man had not been united to God, he

* B. 3. ch. 15.

† B. 3. ch. 20.

could not have been a partaker of immortality. It behoved then the Mediator between God and man, by his affinity with both, to bring both into agreement with each other.

“ ‘ *The all-powerful Word of God, and perfect in righteousness, justly set himself against the apostacy, redeeming his own property from him (Satan) not by violence, as he bore rule over us from the beginning, insatiably making rapine of what was not his own. But the Lord, redeeming us with his own blood, and giving his life for our life, and his flesh for our flesh, effected our salvation.’ ”

“ He beautifully expresses our recovery by a recapitulation in Christ.† ‘ Our Lord would not have gathered up these things in himself, had he not been made flesh and blood according to the original creation of man, saving in himself in the end what had perished in the beginning of Adam. He therefore had flesh and blood, not of another kind, but gathering into himself the very original creation of the Father, he sought that which was lost.’ ‡

“ Undoubtedly the intelligent, scriptural reader will recollect the divine reasoning of the author to the Hebrews very similar to all this. And those who see how well the views of Irenæus are supported by him, will know how to judge of the opinions of those who call this scholastic theology, will see how accurately the primitive fathers understood and maintained the doctrines now deemed fanatical, and will observe the propriety of being zealous for Christian peculiarities. One short quotation shall conclude this account of the book of heresies.

* L. 5. ch. 1.

† ἀνακεφαλαιώσις. Eph. i. 10.—See Dr. Owen's Preface to his “Χριστολογία.”

‡ Euseb. b. 5. ch. 14.

‘‘The Word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of his immense love, became what we are, that he might make us what he is.’—Book 5, Preface.

“Of the few fragments of this author there is nothing that seems to deserve any particular attention, except that of an Epistle to Florinus, whom he had known in early life, and of whom he had hoped better things than those into which he was afterwards seduced. ‘These doctrines, says he, those who were presbyters before us, those who had walked with the apostles, did not deliver to you. For I saw you, when I was a boy, in the lower Asia, with Polycarp, carrying a very splendid appearance in the Emperor’s service, and desirous of being approved of by him. For I choose rather to mention things that happened at that time than facts of a later date. For the instructions of our childhood, growing with our growth, adhere to us most closely, so that I can mention the very spot in which Polycarp sat and expounded, and his coming in and going out, and the very manner of his life, and the figure of his body, and the sermons which he preached to the multitude, and how he described to us his converse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, how he related to us their expressions and what things he had heard from them of the Lord, and of his miracles and of his doctrine. As Polycarp had received from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, he told us all things agreeable to the scriptures. These things then, through the mercy of God visiting me, I heard with seriousness, writing them not on paper, but on my heart, and ever since, through the grace of God, I have a genuine remembrance of them, and I can witness before God, that if that blessed apostolical presbyter had heard any such thing, he would have cried out and stopped his

ears, and in his usual manner have said, "O good God, to what times hast thou reserved me, that I should endure these things!" And he would immediately have fled from the place in which he had heard such doctrines.'"

CHAPTER II.

Tertullian.—Pantænus.—Clemens Alexandrinus.

"WE have not yet had any occasion to take notice of the state of Christianity in the Roman province of Africa. This whole region, once the scene of Carthaginian greatness, abounded with Christians in the second century, though of the manner of the introduction of the gospel and of the proceedings of its first planters we have no account. In the latter part of the second and in the former part of the third century there flourished at Carthage the famous Tertullian, the first Latin writer of the church whose works are come down to us."

He unites with all others in declaring the clear and sound views of the doctrine of the Trinity held by the primitive church.

"He speaks of the Trinity in Unity, 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet one God.' He speaks of the Lord Jesus as both God and man, Son of man and Son of God, and called Jesus Christ. He speaks also of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He observes that this rule of faith had obtained from the beginning of the gospel, antecedent to any former heretics, much more to Praxeas, who was of yesterday."

"The heresy of Praxeas consisted in making the Fa-

ther, Son, and Holy Spirit, all one and the same. The distinction of persons in the Godhead was denied by him. This is no other than what has since been better known by the name of Sabellianism. No doubt the mystery of the Trinity is this way removed; but then what becomes of the divine revelation itself; all attempts to subvert the faith of scripture, on this subject, labour under the same error, a desire to accommodate divine truths, which require the submission of our reason, to our narrow faculties, and to strip the Almighty of his attribute of incomprehensible. Tertullian informs us that Praxeas first brought this evil from Asia into the Roman world, and seduced many, but at last was confuted and silenced by 'an instrument whom God pleased to make use of,' a modest periphrasis, I apprehend, for himself, and the evil seemed eradicated. Even Praxeas himself had the ingenuousness to retract his mistake.

"In his Apology, the eloquence and argumentative powers of our author appear most conspicuous. He refutes, in the usual manner, the stale, heathen calumnies of Christians feeding on infants. The remarkable power of Christians over demons he states in the same manner as various of the fathers have done. He appeals to the consciences of mankind, and a common practice even among idolaters founded on it, as a proof of the unity of the Godhead. His description is remarkably striking. "What God hath given," was an universal mode of speaking. In appealing to God, to say, "God sees it, and I recommend to God, and God will restore to me. O testimony of the soul, naturally in favour of Christianity; and when men seriously pronounce these words, they look not to the capitol, but to heaven. For the soul knows the seat of the living God, whence it had its own origin." I

scarce remember a finer observation made by any author in favour both of the natural voice of conscience and of the patriarchal tradition of true religion; for both may fairly be supposed concerned in the support of this practice. It shows how difficult it was for satan to eradicate entirely every vestige of truth; and every classical reader may observe how common it is for the Pagan writers to speak of God as one, when they are most serious, and instantly to slide into the vulgar polytheism when they begin to trifle.

“It is a beautiful view of the manners and spirit of the Christians of his time, which this Apology exhibits. A few quotations may illustrate the subject, and serve to show what real Christianity does for men.

“ ‘We pray, says he, for the safety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themselves would desire to be propitious to them above all others who are called gods. We, looking up to heaven with outstretched hands, because they are harmless, with naked head, because we are not ashamed, without a prompter, because we pray from the heart, constantly pray for all emperors, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe house, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well-moralized people, a quiet state of the world, whatever Cæsar would wish for himself in his public and private capacity. I cannot solicit these things from any other than from Him: from whom, I know, I shall obtain them, because he alone can do these things, and I am he who may expect them of him, being his servant, who worship him alone, and lose my life for his service. Thus then let the hoofs pierce us, while our hands are stretched out to God, let crosses suspend us, let fires consume us, let swords pierce our breasts, let wild beasts trample

on us, a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring any thing. Act in this manner, ye generous rulers; kill the soul who supplicates God for the emperor. Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves by human fire, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want forces and numbers? Are we not dispersed through the world? It is true we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your places, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum. We leave you only your temples. To what war should we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers, we who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it? Were we to make a general secession from your dominions, you would be astonished at your solitude.

“We are dead to all ideas of honour and dignity; nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns. The whole world is our republic.

“We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the Word of God, we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and excommunication, when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight, and is a strong prejudice of the future judgment, if any behave in so

scandalous a manner as to be debarred from holy communion. Those who preside among us are elderly persons, not distinguished for opulence, but worth of character. Every one pays into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion. 'These are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy, support orphans and decrepid persons, those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the Word of God, are condemned to the mines, or imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some; see, say they, how they love one another.'

"He afterwards takes notice of the extreme readiness with which Christians paid the taxes to government, in opposition to the spirit of fraud and deceit, with which so many acted in these matters. But I must not enlarge; the reader may form an idea of the purity, integrity, heavenly-mindedness, and passiveness under injuries, for which the first Christians were so justly renowned. The effect of that glorious effusion of the Divine Spirit in external things was the production of this meek and charitable conduct, and every evidence that can be desired is given to evince the truth of this account. The confession of enemies unites here with the relations of friends."

"One of the most respectable cities within the precincts of the Roman empire was Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt. Here the gospel had been planted by St. Mark, and from the considerable success which had attended it in most capital towns, it is probable that many were converted. But of the first pastors of this church, and of the work of God among them, we have no account. Our most distinct information begins with what is evil.

The platonic philosophers ruled the taste of this city, which piqued itself on its superior erudition. Ammonias Sacas had, as we have seen, reduced there the notions of the learned into a system, which pretended to embrace all sorts of sentiments, and his successors for several ages followed his plan. We are told, that from St. Mark's time, a Christian catechetical school was supported here. Whether it be so or not, Pantænus is the first master of it of whom we have any account. It should seem from a passage of Eusebius,* that he was an Hebrew by descent. He had by tradition the true doctrine, received from Peter, James, John, and Paul; and no doubt he deserved this testimony of Eusebius, notwithstanding the unhappy mixture of philosophy which he imbibed in this region. For Pantænus was very much addicted to the sect of the stoics, a sort of romantic pretenders to perfection, which doctrine flattered human pride, but was surely ill adapted to our natural imbecility and the views of innate depravity. The combination of this with Christianity must have debased the divine doctrine very much in the system of Pantænus; and though his instructions clouded the light of the gospel among those who were disposed implicitly to follow his dictates, yet it is not improbable, but that many of the simple and illiterate Christians there might happily escape the infection, and preserve, unadulterated, the genuine simplicity of the faith of Christ: the bait of reasoning pride lies more in the way of the learned, and in all ages they are more prone to snatch at it.

“Pantænus always retained the title of the stoic philosopher, after he had been admitted to eminent employments in the Christian church.† For ten years he labori-

* B. 5. ch. 10.

† Cave's Life of Pantænus.

ously discharged the office of catechist, and freely taught all that desired him, whereas the school of his predecessors had been more private.

“Some Indian ambassadors (from what part of India they came, it is not easy to determine) entreated Demetrius, then bishop of Alexandria, to send them some worthy person to preach the faith in their country. Pantænus was fixed on as the person, and the hardships he must have endured in it were doubtless great. But there were at that time* many evangelists, who had the apostolical spirit to propagate the faith at the hazard of their lives. And as Pantænus very freely complied with this call, we have here one of the best proofs of his being possessed of the spirit of the gospel. His labours among ignorant Indians, where neither fame, nor ease, nor profit were attainable, appear to me much more substantial proofs of his godliness, than his catechetical employments at Alexandria could be. The former would oblige him to attend chiefly to Christian fundamentals, and could afford little opportunity of indulging the philosophic spirit. We are told he found in India the gospel of St. Matthew, which had been carried thither by the apostle Bartholomew, who had first preached amongst them. I mention this, but much doubt the truth of it. Of the particular success of his labours we have no account; but he lived to return to Alexandria, and resumed his catechetical office. He died not long after the commencement of the third century. He used to instruct more by word than by writing. Some commentaries on the scriptures are all that are mentioned as his, and of them not a fragment remains.”

“Clemens Alexandrinus was, by his own confession, a scholar of Pantænus, and of the same philosophical cast

* Euseb. b. 5. ch. 9.

of mind. He was of the eclectic sect. It is sincerely to be regretted that Clemens had any acquaintance with them; so far as he mixed Christianity with their notions, so far he tarnished it, and by his zeal, activity, learning, and reputation, at the same time that he taught many, he clouded the light of the gospel among those, who yet in fundamentals were profited by his instruction. Hear how he describes himself: *‘I espouse not this or that philosophy, not the stoic, nor the platonic, nor the epicurean, nor that of Aristotle; but whatever any of these sects had said, that was fit and just, that taught righteousness with a divine and religious knowledge, selecting all this, I call it philosophy.’”

“He succeeded his master Pantænus in the catechetical school, and under him were bred the famous Origen, Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, and other eminent men.”

“Besides the office of catechist, he was made presbyter in the church of Alexandria. During the persecution under Severus, most probably, he visited the east, and had a peculiar intimacy with Alexander bishop of Jerusalem. He appears to have been a holy man, and suffered imprisonment for the faith, and in that situation wrote a letter to the church of Antioch, which was carried by Clemens. Something of the spirit of Christianity appears in the fragment of this letter. ‘Alexander, a servant of God, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ, to the blessed church at Antioch, in the Lord, greeting. Our Lord has made my bonds, in this time of my imprisonment light and easy to me; while I understood that Asclepiades, a person admirably qualified by his eminency in the faith, was by divine providence become bishop of your holy church of Antioch. These letters, brethren, I have sent by Clemens

* Strom. 11. See Cave’s Life of Clemens.

the blessed presbyter, a man of approved integrity, whom ye both do already and shall still further know; who having been here with us according to the good will of God, hath much established and augmented the church of Christ.' From Jerusalem Clemens went to Antioch, and afterwards returned to his charge at Alexandria. The time of his death is uncertain."

CHAPTER III.

Origen.

"SEVERUS, though in his younger days, it should seem, a bitter persecutor of Christians at Lyons, was yet, through the influence of the kindness which he had received from Proculus, favourably disposed toward the Christians. It was not till about the tenth year of his reign, which falls in with the year two hundred and two, that his native ferocity of temper brake out afresh, in kindling a very severe persecution against the Christians. He was just returned victorious, from the East, against Niger, and the pride of prosperity induced him to forbid the propagation of the gospel. Christians still thought it right to obey God rather than man. Severus would be obeyed, and exercised the usual cruelties. The persecution raged every where, but particularly at Alexandria. From various parts of Egypt the Christians were brought thither to suffer, and expired in torments. Of this number was Leonidas, father of the famous Origen; he was beheaded, and left his son very young. Our author* selects from the letters and narrations of his friends some

* Euseb. b. 6. ch. 1.

account of him, which it will be proper to take from his own narrative.

“Lætus was at that time governor of Alexandria and the rest of Egypt, and Demetrius was just elected bishop of the Christians in that city. Great numbers now suffering martyrdom, young Origen panted for the honour, and needlessly exposed himself to danger. His mother checked his imprudent zeal at first by earnest entreaties; but perceiving that he still was bent on suffering with his father, who at that time was closely confined, she very properly exercised her motherly authority by confining him to the house, and hiding from him all his apparel. The vehement spirit of Origen prompted him, when he could do nothing else, to write a letter to his father, in which he thus exhorted him, ‘Father, faint not, and do not be concerned on our account.’ He had been carefully trained in the study of the scriptures under the inspection of his pious father, who, together with the study of the liberal arts, had particularly superintended this most important part of education. Even before he suffered him to be exercised in profane learning, he instructed him in scripture, and gave him daily a certain task out of it to repeat. The penetrating genius of Origen led him, in the course of his employment, to investigate the sense of scripture, and to ask his father questions beyond his ability to solve. The father checked his curiosity, reminded him of his imbecility, and admonished him to be content with the plain, grammatical sense of scripture, which obviously offered itself; but inwardly rejoiced, it seems, that God had given him such a son. And it would not have been amiss, had he rejoiced with trembling; perhaps he did so, and Origen’s early loss of such a father, who probably was more simple in Christian

faith and piety than he himself ever was, might be an extreme disadvantage to him. Youths of great and uncommon parts, accompanied, as is generally the case, with much ambition and boundless curiosity, have often been the instruments of Satan in perverting divine truth; and it is not so much attended to as it ought to be by many truly pious and humble souls, that the superior eminence of youths, whom they respect, in parts and good sense, is by no means a prognostic of the like superiority in real spiritual knowledge and discernment in divine things. Men of genius, if they meet with encouragement, will be sure to distinguish themselves in whatever line of life they move. But persons even of remarkable endowments, though sincere in Christianity, may not only in the practice, but even in the perception of gospel-truths, be far outstripped by others who are naturally much their inferiors, because the latter are by no means so exposed to the crafts of Satan, are so liable to be warped, in their judgments, from Christian simplicity, are more apt to look for understanding from above, and are less disposed to lean to an arm of flesh.

“We seem to discover, in the very beginning of Origen, the foundation of that presumptuous spirit which led him afterwards to philosophize so dangerously in the Christian religion, never to content himself with plain truth, but to hunt after something singular and extraordinary, though it must be acknowledged his sincere desire of serving God appeared from early life; nor does it ever seem to have forsaken him, so that he may be considered as having been a child of God from early years.

“His father dying a martyr, he was left an orphan, aged seventeen years, with his mother and other children, six in number. His father’s substance being confiscated

by the emperor, the family was reduced to great distress. But Providence gave him a friend in a rich and godly matron, who yet supported in her house a certain person of Antioch, who was noted for heresy. We cannot at this distance assign her motives for this; but Origen, though obliged to be in his company, could not be prevailed on to join in prayer with him. He now vigorously applied himself to the improvement of his understanding; and having no more work at school, it seems, because he soon acquired all the learning his master could give him, and finding that the business of catechising was deserted at Alexandria, because of the persecution, he undertook the work himself, and several Gentiles came to hear him, and became his disciples. He was now in his eighteenth year, and in the heat of the persecution distinguished himself by his attachment to the martyrs, not only those of his acquaintance, but in general those who suffered for Christianity. He visited such of them as were fettered in deep dungeons and close imprisonment, and was present with them even after their condemnation, boldly attending them to the place of execution, to the great peril of his own life, openly embracing and saluting them, and was once in imminent danger of being stoned to death on this account. This danger of his was often repeated, insomuch that soldiers were commanded to watch about his house, because of the multitudes that crowded thither for instruction. As the persecution daily prevailed, it seemed however impossible, humanly speaking, for him to escape; he could no longer pass safely through the streets of Alexandria; but often changing lodgings, he was every where pursued, yet his instructions had great effect, and his zeal incited numbers to attend to Christianity.

“The charge of the school was now, by Demetrius the bishop, committed to him alone, and he converted it wholly into a school of religious instruction, maintaining himself by the sale of the profane books which he had been wont to study. Thus he lived many years, an amazing monument at once of industry and self-denial. Not only the day, but the greater part of the night was devoted to religious study, and he practised, with literal conscientiousness, our Lord’s rules of not having two coats, nor shoes, nor providing for futurity. He was familiar with cold, nakedness, and poverty, offended many by his unwillingness to receive their gratuities, and lived many years without the use of shoes, abstained from wine, and lived so abstemiously as to endanger his life. Many imitated his excessive austerities; they were at that time honoured with the name of philosophers, and some of his followers patiently suffered martyrdom.

“I state facts as I find them; a strong spirit of self-righteousness, meeting with a secret ambition, too subtile to be perceived by him who is the dupe of it, and supported by natural fortitude of mind, and the active exertion of great talents, hath enabled many in external things to seem superior in piety to men of real humility and self-diffidence, who, penetrating more happily into the genius of the gospel, by the exercise of faith in the Son of God, and that genuine charity which is its fruit, are led into a course of conduct less dazzling indeed, but much more agreeable to the gospel. One cannot form an high idea of the solid judgment of these Alexandrian Christians. Were there none of the elder and more experienced Christians there, who were capable, with meekness of wisdom, to correct the exuberances of this zealous youth,

and to have shewn him that, by refusing the comforts of life, he affected a superiority to Paul himself, who gratefully received the alms of the Philippians? But this excess must have been attended with great defects in inward, vital godliness. The reader is again referred to 11 Colossians for a comment on the conduct of Origen. How much better had it been for him to have continued a scholar for some time, before his pride was feasted by being appointed a teacher! But the lively flow of genius seems to have been mistaken for great growth in Christian knowledge and piety.

“One of his scholars, called Plutarch, was led to martyrdom. Origen accompanied him, to the place of execution, the odium of the scholar’s sufferings reflected on the master, and it was not without a peculiar Providence that he escaped the vengeance of the citizens. After him suffered Serenus by fire; the third martyr was Heraclides; the fourth Heron. The former had not yet been baptized, being only what was then called a catechumen; the latter had been lately baptized, but both were beheaded. A second Serenus of the same school, having sustained great torments and much pain, was beheaded. A woman also, called Rais, as yet a catechumen suffered death. Potamiæna, a young woman remarkable for beauty, purity of mind, and firmness in the faith of Christ, suffered very dreadful torments; she was scourged very sorely by the order of Aquila the judge, who threatened to deliver her to be abused by the basest characters. But remaining still unmoved, she was led to the fire and burnt together with her mother Marcella.”

“An action performed about this time by Origen illustrates his character in the strongest manner. Though disposed beyond most to allegorize the scriptures. in

one passage he followed the literal sense of the words too closely, ‘There are some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.’* Being much conversant among women as well as men, in his work of catechising and expounding the scriptures, he was thus at once desirous of cutting off all temptations from himself, and the slanders of infidels. But though he practised this upon himself, he took all possible pains to conceal the fact from his familiar friends.

“One cannot but admire how strong self-righteous maxims and views were grown in the church; but who, except those who are lost to all sense of goodness, will not revere the piety of his motives and the fervour of his zeal? It could not however be concealed. Demetrius, his bishop, at first encouraged and commended him; afterwards† through the power of envy, on account of his growing popularity, he published the fact abroad with a view to asperse him. However the bishops of Cæsa-rea and Jerusalem protected and supported him, and ordained him a presbyter in the church. Day and night he continued still to labour at Alexandria.”

CHAPTER IV.

Firmness of Martyrs.

“ALEXANDER, a bishop in Cappadocia, confessed the faith of Christ, and sustained a variety of sufferings, and yet by the providence of God was at length delivered, and travelled afterwards to Jerusalem. There he was joyfully received by Narcissus, the very aged bishop of that See, a man of extraordinary piety, who associated

* Matthew xix. 12.

† Euseb. b. 6. ch. 7.

Alexander with him in the work. Some epistles of the latter were extant in Eusebius' time, who gives us a short fragment of one of them, sufficiently authenticating the fact that those two holy men were joint pastors of Jerusalem.

“ ‘Narcissus greets you, who governed this bishopric before me, and now being an hundred and sixteen years old, prayeth with me, and that very seriously, for the state of the church, and beseeches you to be of one mind with me.’ ”

“ ‘Twelve persons were brought before Saturninus the proconsul at Carthage, the chief of whom were Speratus, Narzal, and Cittin, and three women, Donata, Secunda, and Vestina. When they came before the proconsul he said to them all, ‘You may expect the emperor our master’s pardon, if you return to your senses, and observe the ceremonies of our gods.’ To which Speratus replied, ‘We have never been guilty of any thing that is evil, nor been partakers of injustice. We have even prayed for those who persecute us unjustly: in which we obey our EMPEROR, who prescribed to us this rule of behaviour.’ Saturninus answered, ‘We have also a religion that is simple, we swear by the genius of the emperors, and we offer up vows for their health, which you ought also to do.’ Speratus answered, ‘If you will hear me peaceably, I will declare unto you the mystery of Christian simplicity.’ The proconsul said, ‘Shall I hear you speak ill of our ceremonies? rather swear all of you, by the genius of the emperors our masters, that you may enjoy the pleasures of life.’ Speratus answered, ‘I know not the genius of the emperors. I serve God, who is in heaven, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. I have never been guilty of any crime punishable by the

public laws; if I buy any thing, I pay the duties to the collectors; I acknowledge my God and Saviour to be the Emperor of all nations; I have made no complaints against any person, and therefore they ought to make none against me.' The proconsul turning to the rest said, 'Do not ye imitate the folly of this mad wretch, but rather fear our prince and obey his commands.' Cittin answered, 'We fear only the Lord our God, who is in heaven.' The proconsul then said. 'Let them be carried to prison, and put in fetters till to-morrow.'

"The next day the proconsul being seated on his tribunal, caused them to be brought before him, and said to the women, 'Honour our prince, and do sacrifice to the gods.' Donata replied, 'We honour Cæsar as Cæsar; but to God we offer prayer and worship.' Vestina said, 'I also am a Christian.' Secunda said, 'I also believe in my God, and will continue stedfast to him; and for your gods, we will not serve and adore them.' The proconsul ordered them to be separated; then, having called for the men, he said to Speratus, 'Perseverest thou in being a Christian?' Speratus answered, 'Yes, I do persevere; let all give ear; I am a Christian;' which being heard by the rest, they said, 'We also are Christians.' The proconsul said, 'You will neither consider nor receive mercy.' They replied, 'Do what you please, we shall die joyfully for the sake of Jesus Christ.' The proconsul asked, 'What books are those which you read and revere?' Speratus replied, 'The Four Gospels of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Epistles of the apostle St. Paul, and all the scripture that is inspired of God.' The proconsul said, 'I will give you three days to come to yourselves.' Upon which Speratus answered, 'I am a Christian, and such are all those who are with me, and

we will never quit the faith of our Lord Jesus; do, therefore, what you think fit.’

“The proconsul seeing their resolution, pronounced sentence against them, that they should die by the hands of the executioner, in these terms: ‘Speratus, &c. having acknowledged themselves to be Christians, and having refused to pay due honour to the emperor, I command their heads to be cut off.’ This sentence having been read, Speratus and the rest said, ‘We give thanks to God, who honoureth us this day with being received as martyrs in heaven, for confessing his name.’ They were carried to the place of punishment, where they fell on their knees all together, and having again given thanks to Jesus Christ, they were beheaded.*

“†At Carthage itself four young catechumens were seized, Revocatus and Felicitas, slaves to the same master, with Saturninus and Secundulus, and also Vivia Perpetua, a lady of quality. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a catechumen; she was married, and had a son at her breast, which she suckled herself; she was about twenty-two years of age, and was then with child. To these five Satur voluntarily joined himself by an excess of zeal too common at that time. While they were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a Pagan, but full of affection to his favourite offspring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His entreaties were vain. Her pious constancy, to him appeared an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days, while these catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the prison, they found means to be baptized, and Perpetua’s prayers

* Fleury, b. 5. p. 77.

† Acta sincera, p. 86.

were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark prison. To the rest, more accustomed to hardships, this change of scene had nothing in it so terrible. To her, who had known nothing but the delicacies of genteel life, it was peculiarly ghastly, and her concern for her infant was extreme. Tertius and Pomponius, two deacons of the church, obtained by money, that they might go out of the dark dungeon, and for some hours refresh themselves in a more commodious place, where Perpetua gave the breast to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For some time her mind was devoured with concern for the distress she had brought on her family, though it was for the sake of a good conscience, but in time her spirit was more composed, and her prison became a palace.

“Her father some time after came to the prison overwhelmed with grief, which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he made on his passionate behaviour to her at their last interview. ‘Have pity, my daughter,’ says he, ‘on my grey hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name; if I myself have brought you up to this age, if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind, respect your father and your aunt (these, it seems, were joined in the interests of paganism, while the mother appears to have been a Christian, otherwise his silence concerning her seems scarce to be accounted for) have compassion on your son, who cannot survive you; lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all; for if you perish, we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace.’ The old gentleman, with much tenderness, kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no

longer his daughter, but his mistress. He was the only person of the family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua, though inwardly torn with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the divine disposal.

“The next day they were all brought before the court, and examined before vast crowds. There the unhappy old gentleman appeared with his little grandson, and taking Perpetua aside, conjured her to have some pity on her child. The procurator, Hilarian, joined in the suit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the scaffold. Hilarian ordered him to be beaten, and a blow, which he received with a staff, was felt by Perpetua very severely.

“Hilarian ordered them to be exposed to the wild beasts. They then returned cheerfully to their prison. Perpetua sent the deacon, Pomponius, to demand her child of her father, which he refused to return. The health of the child, we are told, suffered not, nor did Perpetua feel any bodily inconvenience.

“Secundulus died in prison. Felicitas was eight months gone with child, and seeing the day of the public shews to be near, she was afflicted lest her execution should be deferred. Three days before the spectacles, her companions joined in prayer for her. Presently after her prayers, her pains came upon her, and she was delivered of a child, but with much difficulty. One of the door keepers, who perhaps expected to have found in her a stoical insensibility, and heard her cries, said, ‘Do you complain of this? what will you do when you are exposed to the beasts?’ Felicitas answered with a sagacity truly Christian, ‘It is I that suffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for

his sake." Her new-born daughter was delivered to a Christian woman, who nursed it as her own.

"The tribune, believing a report of some that the prisoners would free themselves by magical practices, treated them roughly. 'Why dont you,' says Perpetua, 'give us some relief? Will it not be for your honour that we should appear well fed at the spectacles?'"

"This address of hers had the desired effect, and procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. The day before the shows they gave them their last meal, the martyrs did their utmost to convert it into an **αγανη*, they ate in public; their brethren and others were allowed to visit them, and the keeper of the prison himself, by this time, was converted to the faith; they talked to the people, warned them to flee from the wrath to come, pointed out to them their own happy lot, and smiled at the curiosity of those who ran to see them. 'Observe well our faces,' cries Satur, with much animation, 'that ye may know them at the day of judgment.'

"The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial; joy, rather than fear was painted on their looks. Perpetua, cherished by Jesus Christ, went on with a composed countenance and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest the spectators might draw wrong conclusions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous habits were offered them: 'We sacrifice our lives,' say they, 'to avoid this, and thus we have bargained with you.' The tribune desisted from his demand.

"Perpetua sang, as already victorious, and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satur, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into Hilarian's presence, 'Thou judgest us,' say they, 'and

* A Love Feast.

God shall judge thee.' The mob was enraged, and insisted on their being scourged before they were exposed to the beasts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in being conformed to their Saviour's sufferings.

"Perpetua and Felicitas were stript, and put into the nets, and exposed to a wild cow. The spectators were shocked at the sight, the one being an accomplished beauty, the other newly delivered, her breasts still dropping; they drew them back and covered them with loose garments. Perpetua was first attacked, and falling on her back, she put herself into a sitting posture, and seeing her habit torn by her side, she retired to cover herself; she then gathered up her hair, that she might not seem disordered; she raised herself up, and seeing Felicitas bruised, she gave her her hand and lifted her up; then they went toward the gate, where Perpetua was received by a catechumen, called Rusticus, who attended her. 'I wonder,' says she, 'when they will expose us to the cow;' she had been, it seems, insensible of what had passed, nor could believe it till she saw on her body and clothes the marks of her sufferings. She caused her brother to be called, and addressing herself to him and Rusticus, she said, 'Continue firm in the faith, love one another, and be not offended at our sufferings.'

"The people insisted on having the martyrs brought into the midst of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them die; some of the martyrs rose up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiss of charity, others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. Perpetua fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, who pricked her between the bones and made her cry out. She herself guided

his trembling hand to her throat, and thus with the rest she slept with Jesus."

"The power of God appeared evidently displayed during the course of this dreadful persecution, by the sudden and amazing conversions of several persons who voluntarily suffered death for that doctrine which they before detested. Of this we have the very respectable testimony of Origen, who, whatever other defects he be justly charged with, is certainly allowed to be of unquestionable veracity.*

"Severus would naturally extend this persecution to Gaul, the scene of his former cruelties. In fact, it was now that Irenæus and many more suffered with him, and Lyons was once more dyed with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Vivarius and Androlus, who had been sent by Polycarp here to preach the gospel, suffered death. At Comana in Pamphylia, Zoticus the bishop, who had distinguished himself by writing against the Montanists, obtained the crown of martyrdom.

"Now it was that some churches purchased their peace and quiet, by paying money not only to the magistrates, but also to the informers and soldiers who were appointed to search them out. The pastors of the churches approved of this proceeding, because it was only suffering the loss of their goods, and preferring that to the endangering of their souls. However an accurate casuist may decide this question, it is easily conceivable that this might be practised in real uprightness of heart by many. But it is usual with God to moderate the sufferings of his people, and not suffer them to be tried by persecution at once very long and very violent.

"In the year two hundred and eleven the tyrant Seve-

* Contra Celsum, L. 1.

rus was called hence, after a reign of eighteen years, and under his son and successor, Caracalla, monster of wickedness as he proved to be, the church found repose and tranquillity.

“Divine Providence had prepared for the church this mitigation of her trials, long before, in the circumstances of Caracalla’s education. He had known Proculus the Christian, who had recovered the health of his father, and was maintained in his palace to his death, and had himself been nursed, when an infant, by a Christian woman. Though this could not win his heart to Jesus Christ, it gave him an early predilection in favour of Christians, insomuch that observing, when he was seven years old, a playfellow of his to be beaten because he followed the Jewish religion,* (the Pagan author most probably means the Christian,) he could not, for some time after, behold with patience either his father or the father of the boy. Certainly few men have ever exceeded him in the ferocious vices; yet, during the seven years and six months which he reigned, the Christians found in him friendship and protection. Indeed for the space of thirty-and-eight years, from the death of Severus to the reign of Decius, if we except the short, turbulent interval of Maximinus, the calm of the church continued.”†

CHAPTER V.

Cyprian.

NOTHING of great moment occurred in the history of the church under the immediate successors of Caracalla.

* Spartian’s Caracalla.

† Sulpitius Severus, b. 2. c. 42.

We read of Origen that he was active; rapid in the prosecution of study; useful against heretics; and that his fame extended.—We read of one of the emperors that he was disposed to avow himself a Christian:—but our attention is not forcibly arrested until Cyprian of Carthage appears.

“Cyprian was a professor of oratory in the city of Carthage, and a man of wealth, quality, and dignity. Cæcilius, a Carthaginian presbyter, had the felicity under God, to conduct him to the knowledge of Christ, and in his gratitude Cyprian afterwards assumed the prænomen of Cæcilius. His conversion was about the year 246, two years before he was chosen bishop of Carthage. About thirteen years was the whole scene of his Christian life. But God can do great things in a little time, or to speak more nervously with the sacred writer, ‘one day is with the Lord as a thousand years.’ He did not proceed by slow, painful steps of argumentation, but seems to have been led on with vast rapidity by the effectual operation of the Divine Spirit, and happily, in a great measure at least, to have escaped the shoals and quicksands of false learning and self-conceit, which we have seen so much to tarnish the character of his eastern brethren. Faith and love seem in native simplicity to have possessed him when an early convert. He saw with pity the poor of the flock, and he knew no method so proper of employing the unrighteous mammon as to relieve their distress.* He sold whole estates for their benefit.

“It was an excellent rule of the apostle’s concerning ordination, ‘Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.’ There appeared however in Cyprian a spirit at once so simple, so

* Pontius Vit. Cyp.

zealous, and so intelligent, that in about two years after his conversion he was chosen presbyter and then bishop of Carthage.

“It was no feigned virtue that advanced him thus in the eyes of the people. The love of Christ evidently preponderated in him above all secular considerations. His wife opposed his Christian spirit of liberality in vain. The widow, the orphan, and the poor, found in him a sympathizing benefactor continually. The presbyter Cæcilius must have beheld with much delight the growing virtues of his pupil, and dying recommended to his care his wife and children. It was with much reluctance that Cyprian observed the designs of the people to choose him for their bishop. He retired to avoid their solicitations, his house was besieged, and his retreat rendered impossible. He yielded at length to accept of the painful pre-eminence. For so he soon found it. Yet five presbyters were enemies to his exaltation. His lenity, patience, and benevolence toward them was remarked by all.

“Pontius tells us that he did many things before he was chosen bishop. Indeed a spirit active like his must be employed. But he does not oblige us with the communication of any of his works. His letter to Donatus may safely be placed within this period, as St. Austin tells us it was his first work. Part of this, as it will illustrate his conversion, and show the spirit of a man penetrated with divine love, and lately recovered from the idolatry of the world, well deserves to be translated. ‘I find your whole care and concern at present is for conversion: you look at me, and expect from me in your affection what I am afraid I cannot by any means answer. Small fruits must be expected from my meanness; yet I will attempt, for the subject matter is on my side. Let plausible arts

of ambition be used in courts; but when we speak of the Lord God, plainness and sincerity, not the powers of eloquence should be used. Hear then things not eloquent, but strong; not courtly, but rude; yet proper to celebrate the divine goodness. Hear then what is felt before it is learnt, and is not collected by a long course of speculation, but is imbibed by the soul, by the compendium of grace ripening her as at once.

“ ‘While I lay in darkness and the night of paganism, and when I fluctuated uncertain and dubious with wandering steps in the sea of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harsh and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what divine grace had promised, that a man should be born again; and that, being animated with the love of regeneration by a new life, he should strip himself of what he was before, and though the body remained the same, he should, in his mind, become altogether a new creature.* How can so great a change be possible, said I, that a man should suddenly and at once put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him. These evils are deeply and closely fixed in us. How shall he learn parsimony who has been accustomed to expensive and magnificent feasts? And how shall he who has been accustomed to purple, gold, and costly attire, condescend to the simplicity of a plebeian habit? Can he who was delighted with the honours of ambition live private and obscure? He, attended with crowds of clients, thinks solitude the most dreadful punishment. He must still, thought I, be infested by tenacious allurements; drunkenness, pride, anger, rapacity, cruelty, ambition, and lust, must still domineer over him.

* “ An instance we have here of the powerful effects of regeneration attending baptism in those days.”

“In all this I had a peculiar eye to my own case; I was myself entangled in many errors of my former life, from which I did not think it possible to be cleared: whence I favoured my vices, and through despair of what was better I cleaved to my own evils as vernacular. But after the filth of my former sins was washed off by the laver of regeneration, and divine light infused itself from above into my heart, now purified and cleansed; after, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit from heaven, the new birth had made me a new creature indeed, immediately and in an amazing manner dubious things began to be cleared up, things once shut to be opened, dark things to shine forth; what before seemed difficult, now appeared feasible, and that was now evidently practicable which had been deemed impossible; I acknowledged that which was born after the flesh, and had lived enslaved by wickedness, was of the earth; but the new life, now animated by the Holy Ghost, began to be of God. You know yourself, and recollect as well as myself, what that death of crimes and that life of virtues took from us, and what it conferred upon us. You know yourself, nor do I proclaim it: to boast of one's own praises is odious; though that cannot be called an expression of boasting, but of gratitude, whatever is not ascribed to the virtue of man, but is professed to proceed from the gift of God; so that a deliverance from sin begins to be of faith, the preceding state of sin was the effect of human error. Of God it is, of God, I say, even all that we can do; thence we live, thence we have strength, thence conceiving and assuming vigour, though as yet placed below, we know beforehand the vestiges of our future felicity. Let only fear be the guardian of innocence, that the Lord, who kindly shone into our minds by the effusion of heavenly grace, may be

detained as our guest by the soul delighting in him, in a regular course of upright conduct, lest pardon received should beget a careless presumption, and the old enemy break in afresh.

“ ‘But if you keep the road of innocence and righteousness, if you walk with footsteps that do not slide, if hanging with all your heart and with all your might on God, you be only what you have begun to be, you will then find according to the proportion of faith, so will your attainments and enjoyments be. For no bound or measure can be assigned in the reception of divine grace, as is the case of earthly benefits. The Holy Spirit poured forth profusely, is confined by no limits, nor restrained by any barriers, he flows perpetually, he bestows in rich abundance. Let our heart only thirst and be open to receive him; as much of capacious faith as we bring, so much abounding grace do we draw from him. Hence an ability is given, in sober chastity, in uprightness of mind, in purity of words, for the healing of the sick, to be able to extinguish the force of poison, to cleanse the filth of distempered minds, to speak peace to the hostile, tranquillity to the violent, and gentleness to the fierce; to compel unclean and wandering spirits by menaces to quit their hold of men, to scourge and control the foe, and bring him to confess what he is by torments. Thus, of what we have already begun to be, the spirit received enjoys its licenses; though, till we have changed our body and members, the prospect, as yet carnal, is obscured by the cloud of the world. What a power, what an energy is this! that the soul should not only be emancipated from slavery, and be made free and clean, but still stronger and victorious, to be able to triumph over the powers of the enemy?’ ”

“We see a man of business and of the world rising at once a Phoenix in the church, no extraordinary theologian, in point of accurate knowledge, yet an useful, practical divine, an accomplished pastor, flaming with the love of God and of souls, and with unremitted activity spending and being spent for Christ Jesus. This is the Lord’s doing, and it should be remarked as his. We shall see his own conversion prepared him for real service, and while they disputed and reasoned in the east, in the west they loved.

“He seems to express a remarkable influence of divine grace as having accompanied his baptism. It was reasonable to suppose that it was commonly the case at that time: the inward and spiritual grace really attended the outward and visible sign. It is to be lamented, that the perversion of after ages availing itself of the ambiguous language of the fathers on this subject, which with them was natural enough, supposed a necessary connexion to take place where there had been a common one. In Cyprian’s time to call baptism itself the new birth was not very dangerous. In our age it is poison itself; for it has long been the fashion to suppose all baptized persons regenerate of course; and thus have men learnt to furnish themselves with a convenient evasion of all that is written in scripture concerning the godly motions of the Holy Spirit.

“Cyprian goes on, ‘and that the marks of divine goodness may appear the more perspicuously by a discovery of the truth, I will lay open to your view the real state of the world, removing the darkness of evils, and detecting the hidden darkness of this present course of things. Fancy yourself for a little time withdrawn to the top of a high mountain, thence inspect the appearance of things

below you, and looking all around, yourself unfettered by worldly connexions, observe the fluctuating tempests of the world, you will pity mankind, and admonished of your own bliss, and made more thankful to God, you will with more joy congratulate your escape.’

“He then gives an affecting view of the immensity of evils which the state of mankind at that time exhibited, and graphically delineates the miseries of public and private life, and then returns to the description of the blessing of true Christianity.

“‘The only placid and sound tranquillity then, the only solid, firm, and perpetual security is, if any man delivered from the tempests of this restless scene, be stationed in the port of salvation, lift up his eyes from earth to heaven, and being admitted into the favour of the Lord, and approaching near to his God with his mind, justly boast that whatever sublime and great in human things among others, lies within the sphere of his conscience. He who is greater than the world, can desire nothing, can want nothing of the world. What a stable, what an unshaken protection is it, a castle truly divine and fraught with eternal good, to be loosed from the snares of an entangling world, to be purged from earthly dregs, to be wafted into the light of immortal day, and to see what the insidious rage of the enemy (who before infested us) plotted against us. We are the more compelled to love what we shall be, while it is allowed us both to know and to condemn what we were. Nor is there any need for this of price, of canvassing, or of manual labour, that the complete dignity or power of man may be acquired by elaborate efforts; but the gift of God is gratuitous and easy. As the sun shines freely, as the fountain bubbles, as the rain bedews, so the celestial Spirit infuses himself. After the

soul, looking up to heaven, has known its Author, higher than the earth, and sublimer than all secular power, she begins to be what she believes herself to be. Do you, whom the heavenly warfare hath marked for divine service, only preserve untainted and sober your Christian course by the virtues of religion. Let prayer or reading be your assiduous employment; one while speak with God, another while hear him speak to you; let him instruct you by his precepts, let him regulate you; whom he hath made rich, none shall make poor. There can be no penury to him whose heart has once been fattened with celestial marrow. Roofs arched with gold, and houses inlaid with marble, will be vile in your eyes, when you know that you yourself are rather to be cultivated and adorned; that this house is more valuable which the Lord has chosen to be his temple, in which the Holy Ghost has begun to dwell. Let us adorn this house with the paintings of innocence, let us illuminate it with the light of righteousness. This will never fall into ruin through the decays of age; its ornaments shall never fade. Whatever is not genuine is precarious, and affords to the possessor no sure foundation. This remains in its culture perpetually vivid, in honour spotless, in splendour eternal; it can neither be abolished nor extinguished; only it will receive a richer improvement of its form at the resurrection of the body.

“‘Let us spend this day in joy, nor let an hour of our entertainment be unconnected with divine grace. Let the sober banquet resound with psalms; and as your memory is good, your voice harmonious, perform this office according to custom. Your dear friends will be agreeably fed, if we hear spiritually, and religious harmony delight our ears.’”

“In all this the intelligent reader sees a picture of a Christian alive, possessed of some rich portion of that effusion of the Holy Ghost, which, from the apostles’ days, still exhibited Christ Jesus, and fitted by experience to communicate to others the real gospel, and to be an happy instrument of guiding souls to that rest which remains for the people of God.”

While Cyprian was pursuing his course of faithful labour, the emperor Philip died, and was succeeded by Decius. He aimed at the destruction of the Christian name. Persecution was let loose in its utmost rage. Cyprian regarded it as a chastisement from God, designed to arouse and purify the church.

“At Rome the persecution raged with unremitting violence. There Fabian the bishop suffered, and for some time it became impracticable to elect a successor; and yet it does not appear that the metropolis suffered more in proportion than some other places, since we find that the flame of persecution had driven some bishops from distant provinces, who fled for shelter to Rome.* Cyprian, however, having been regularly informed by the Roman clergy of the martyrdom of their bishop, congratulated them on his glorious exit,† and exulted on occasion of his uprightness and integrity. He expresses the pleasure he conceived that his edifying example had so much penetrated their minds, and owns the energy which he felt to imitate the pattern.

“Moyse and Maximus, two Roman presbyters, with other confessors, were also seized and imprisoned. Attempts were repeatedly made to persuade them to relinquish the faith, but in vain. Cyprian found means to write to them also a letter full of benevolence, and

* Ep. 31. Pam. Edit.

† Ep. 4.

breathing the strongest pathos.* He tells them that his heart was with them continually, that he prayed for them in his public ministry, and in private. He comforts them under the pressures of hunger and thirst which they endured, and congratulates them for living now not for this life, but for the next, and particularly because their example would be a means of confirming many who were in a wavering state. But Carthage soon became an unsafe scene to Cyprian himself. By repeated suffrages of the people at the theatre he was demanded to be taken and given to the lions; and it behoved him immediately either to retire into a place of safety, or to expect the crown of martyrdom." He retired for two years.

CHAPTER VI.

Cyprian.—His Labours.

"CYPRIAN was never more active than in his retreat. Nothing of moment occurred in ecclesiastical affairs either in Africa or in Italy with which he was not acquainted; and his counsels under God were of the greatest influence in both countries. I shall endeavour to abbreviate the account from his own letters which were written in this period.

"The presbyters of Carthage sent Clementius, a sub-deacon, to Rome, from whom the Roman clergy learnt the retreat of the bishop. They, in return, to express to the Africans their perfect agreement in opinion concerning the fact, because he was an eminent character, and a life extremely valuable to the church. They represent

* Ep. 16.

the conflict as very important, which God had now permitted, to try his servants, willing to manifest both to angels, and to men, that the conqueror shall be crowned, and the conquered be self-condemned. They express the deep sense which they had both of their own situation and that of the clergy of Carthage, whose duty it was to take care not to incur the censure passed on faithless shepherds in the prophet,* but rather to imitate their Lord the good shepherd who laid down his own life for the sheep,† and who so earnestly and repeatedly charges Simon Peter, as a proof of his love to his Master, to feed his sheep.‡ ‘We would not wish, dear brethren,’ say they, ‘to find you mere mercenaries, but good shepherds, since you know it must be highly sinful in you not to exhort the brethren to stand immoveable in the faith, lest the brethren be totally subverted by idolatry. Nor do we only in words thus exhort you, but, as you may learn from many who come from us to you, we have done, and still do, with the help of God, all these things with all solicitude and at the hazard of our lives, having before our eyes the fear of God and perpetual punishment, rather than the fear of men and a temporary calamity; not deserting the brethren, and exhorting them to stand in the faith, and to be ready to follow their Lord when called; we have also done our utmost to recover those who had gone up to sacrifice to save their lives. Our church stands firm in the faith in general, though some, overcome by terror, either because they were persons in high life, or were moved by the fear of man, have lapsed; yet these, though separated from us, we do not give up as lost altogether, but we exhort them to repent, if they may find mercy with him who

* Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4.

† John x.

‡ John xxi

is able to save; lest, by relinquishing them, we make them still more incurable.

“ ‘ Thus, brethren, we would wish you also to do, as much as in you lies, exhorting the lapsed, should they be seized a second time, to confess their Saviour. And we suggest to you to receive again into communion any of these, if they heartily desire it, and give proofs of sound repentance. And certainly officers should be appointed to minister to the widows, the sick, those in prison, and those who are in a state of banishment. A special care should be exercised over the catechumens, to preserve them from apostacy; and those whose duty it is to inter the dead ought to consider the interment of the martyrs as matter of indispensable obligation.

“ ‘ Certain we are, that those servants who shall be found to have been thus faithful in that which is least will have authority over ten cities.* May God, who does all things for those who hope in him, grant that we may all be found thus diligently employed! The brethren in bonds, the clergy, and the whole church salute you, all of us with earnest solicitude watching for all who call on the name of the Lord. And we beseech you, in return, to be mindful of us also in your prayers.’

“ Several observations offer themselves on this occasion. 1. It appears both at Rome and Carthage that the reduced mode of episcopacy was the form of ecclesiastical government which gradually prevailed in the Christian world. It is not to be supposed that the whole body of Christians either at Rome, or at Carthage, was no more than what might be contained in one assembly. The inference is obvious.

“ 2. The Roman church appears, in the beginning of

* Luke xix, 19.

Decius' persecution at least, to have been in a much more thriving state than that of Carthage, and their clergy to have been models worthy of imitation in all ages.

“ 3. The administration of discipline wisely tempered by tenderness and strictness among them, is admirable.

“ 4. The work of the Divine Spirit infusing the largest charity, even to the laying down of their lives for the brethren, is apparent among them.

“ See now the spirit of a primitive pastor, full of charity and meekness, zeal and prudence, in the following letter of Cyprian to his clergy.

“ ‘ Being hitherto preserved by the favour of God, I salute you, dearest brethren, rejoicing to hear of your safety. As present circumstances permit not my presence among you, I beg you, by your faith and by the ties of religion, to discharge your office, in conjunction with mine also, that nothing be wanting either on the head of discipline or of diligence. I beg that nothing may be wanting to supply the necessities of those who are imprisoned because of their glorious confession of God, or who labour under the pressures of indigence and poverty, since the whole ecclesiastical fund is in the hands of the clergy for this very purpose, that a number may have it in their power to relieve the wants of individuals.

“ ‘ I beg further, that you would use every prudential and cautious method to procure the peace of the church; and if the brethren, through charity, wish to confer with and visit those pious confessors, whom the divine goodness hath thus far shone upon by such good beginnings, that they would however do this cautiously, not in crowds, nor in a multitude; lest any odium should hence arise, and the liberty of admission be denied altogether; and

while, through greediness, we aim at too much, we lose all. Consult therefore and provide, that this may be done safely and with discretion; so that the presbyters one by one, accompanied by the deacons in turn, may successively minister to them, because the change of persons visiting them is less liable to breed suspicion. For in all things we ought to be meek and humble, as becomes the servants of God, to redeem the time, to have a regard for peace, and provide for the people. Most dearly beloved and longed for, I wish you all prosperity, and to remember us. Salute all the brethren; Victor the deacon, and those that are with us, salute you.* †

“The defection of such numbers must have penetrated deeply the fervent and charitable spirit of Cyprian. Not only very many of the laity, but part of the clergy had also been seduced. ‘I could have wished,’† says he, ‘dearest brethren, to have had it in my power to salute your whole body sound and entire; but as the melancholy tempest has, in addition to the fall of so many of the people, also affected part of the clergy, sad accumulation of our sorrow! we pray the Lord, that by divine mercy we may be enabled to salute you, at least whom we have known to stand firm in faith and virtue, safe for the time to come. And though the cause loudly called on me to hasten my return to you; first, on account of my own desire and regret for the loss of your company, a desire which burns strongly with me; in the next place; that we might in full council settle the various objects in the church which require attention; yet, on the whole, to remain still concealed seemed more advisable on account of other advantages which pertain

* Epis. 5.

† Epis. 6

to the general safety, an account of which our dear brother Tertullus will give you, who, agreeably to that care which he employs in divine works with so much zeal, was also the adviser of this counsel, that I should act with caution and moderation, and not rashly commit myself to the public view in a place where I had so often been sought and called for.

“ ‘ Relying therefore on your charity and conscientiousness, of which I have had good experience, I exhort and charge you by these letters, that you, whose situation is less dangerous and invidious, would supply my lack of service. Let the poor be attended to as much as possible, those I mean who have stood the test of persecution; suffer them not to want necessities, lest indigence do that against them which persecution could not. I know the charity of the brethren has provided for very many of them; yet if any want meat or clothing, as I wrote you before, while they were yet in prison,* let their necessities be supplied.’ ”

“ In what follows he shows the deep knowledge which he had of the depravity of the heart, apt to fall, through vain-glory and self-conceit, on the consciousness of having well performed our part in any respect, and I cannot forbear transcribing the practical rules of humility which follow.

“ ‘ Only let them know, that they must be instructed and taught by you, as the doctrines of scripture require subordination in the people to their pastors; they should cultivate an humble, modest, and peaceable demeanour, that those who have been glorious in confession, may be equally so in conduct. The harder trial yet remains: the Lord saith, ‘ He that endureth to the end, the same

* It appears from hence that a number of them had been released.

shall be saved.* Let them imitate the Lord whose humility never shone more than at the eve of his passion, when he washed his disciples' feet. The apostle Paul too, after repeated sufferings, still continued mild and humble. His assumption to the third heaven begat in him no arrogance, neither, says he, 'did we eat any man's bread for nought, but laboured and travailed night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you.†

“ ‘Each of these things do you instil into the brethren; and because he who humbles himself shall be exalted, now is the time more particularly that they should fear the snares of the enemy of souls, who loves to attack the strongest, and to revenge the disgrace which he has already sustained from them. The Lord grant that in due season I may be enabled to see them again, and exhort them to useful purpose. For I am grieved to hear that some run about in insolent and idle fooleries, or give themselves up to strife, and even pollute those members which had confessed Christ, by fornication, and are not willing to be subject to the deacons or presbyters, but seem to act as if they intended, by the bad conduct of a few confessors, to bring disgrace on the whole body. He is a true confessor indeed, of whom the church may not blush, but glory.

“ ‘To the point concerning which certain presbyters wrote to me, I can answer nothing alone; for from the beginning of my bishopric I determined to do nothing without your consent and the consent of the people. But when I shall return to you by the favour of God, we will treat in common of all things.’

“ † In the next letter to the confessors he dwells on

* Matthew x. 22.

† 2 Thess. iii. 8.

‡ Epis. 7.

the same subject, the ill conduct of some of them. The use of good discipline in the church of God, the benefits of orderly subjection in the members, the danger of pride and self-exaltation, and the deceitfulness of the human heart, appear hence abundantly.

“ After having congratulated them on the steadiness of their confession, he reminds them of the necessity of perseverance, since faith itself and the new birth saves us to life eternal, not merely as once received, but preserved. He reminds them, that the Lord regards him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at his words, and he rejoices to find that the greatest part of the confessors thus adorned the gospel. But he had heard that some of them were puffed up; to these he exhibits the mild, charitable, and humble spirit of the Lamb of God: ‘ And dare,’ says he, ‘ any one who lives by him now, and who lives in him, to lift himself up with pride? He that is least among you, the same shall be great. How execrable ought that to appear among you which we have heard with the deepest sorrow of heart!’ He then repeats what he had before mentioned of the lasciviousness of some.

“ ‘ Contentions and strifes ought to have no place among you, since the Lord has left us his peace. I beseech you, abstain from reproaches and abuse; for he who speaks what is peaceable, and good, and just, according to the precepts of Christ, confesses Christ daily. We renounced the world when we were baptized; but now we truly renounce the world, when being tried and proved by God, leaving all our own things we have followed the Lord, and stand and live in his faith and fear. Let us strengthen one another with mutual exhortations, and strive to grow in the Lord, that when in his mercy

he shall give us peace, which he has promised, we may return to the church as new men, and that both our brethren and the Gentiles may receive us improved in holy conduct, that they who before admired the fortitude of Christians, may admire also the excellency of their morals.’

“ The mind of Cyprian, full of the fear of God, and reflecting, from a comparison of Christian precepts with the practice of professors, how deeply his people had provoked the Lord before the persecution, was vehemently incited to stir them up to repentance. See how he preaches to the people from his recess.*

“ ‘ Though I am sensible, dearest brethren, for the fear which we all owe to God, that you are instant in prayers, yet I also admonish you that you would breathe out your souls to God, not only in words, but also in fasting, tears, and every method of supplication. In truth, we must understand and confess that the apostacy which, in so large a degree, has wasted our flock and still wastes it, is the proper consequence of our sins.’

“ He then goes on to speak of their practical corruptions, as he does in his treatise concerning the lapsed. ‘ And what plagues, what stripes do we not deserve, since even confessors, who ought to be patterns to the rest, are quite disorderly! Hence, while the tumid and indecent pride of their confession puffs up some, torments have come, and torments unremitted, tedious, and most distressing, even to death itself.’

“ ‘ Let us pray with our whole heart for mercy, if in receiving we find a delay, because we have deeply offended; let us knock, because to him that knocketh it shall be opened, if only prayers, groans, and tears beat the

* Epis. 8.

door.' He then records some visions, which, as they rather suit the dispensation of that age, in which miracles were by no means wanting, I pass over.

“ ‘ Our Master himself prayed for us, being himself no sinner, but bearing our sins. And if he labour and watch for us and our sins, how much more should we be urgent in prayer, first entreating our Lord himself, and then through him we may obtain favour with God the Father. The Father himself corrects and takes care of us, standing still in the faith in the midst of pressures, and sticking close to his Christ, as it is written, ‘ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?’ None of these can separate believers, nothing can pluck off those who stick to his body and blood. Persecution is the examination and trial of our heart. God would have us to be sifted and tried, nor was ever his help wanting in trials to those who believe. Let our eyes be lifted up to heaven, lest earth with its enticements deceive us. If the Lord see us humble and quiet, lovingly united, and corrected by the present tribulation, he will deliver us. Correction has come first, pardon will follow; let us only pray on in steady faith, and like men placed between the ruins of the fallen, and the remains of those who fear, between a numerous company of the sick, and a small band of those who stand.’

“ The persecution at Carthage hence appears very dreadful, but mostly so on account of the number of apostates; and Christian faith, patience, and magnanimity in Cyprian, and a small remnant, were in full exercise.

“ The persecutors endeavoured to lessen the number of Christians by banishing those who confessed Christ

from Carthage; but this not answering their purpose, they proceeded to cruel torments. Cyprian hearing that some had expired under their sufferings, and others were still in prison yet alive, wrote to those last a letter of encouragement and consolation. Their limbs had been sorely mangled and torn, and appeared like one continued wound; yet they remained firm in the faith and love of Jesus. One of them (Mappalicus) amidst his torments, said to the proconsul, 'To-morrow you shall see a contest.' What he uttered in faith the Lord fulfilled, and he lost his life in the conflict next day.*

"So keenly was the mind of Cyprian set on heavenly things, and so completely lifted up above the world, that he ardently exulted and triumphed in those scenes of horror. He describes the martyrs and confessors as wiping away the tears of the church, while she was bewailing the ruins of her sons. Even Christ himself he describes as looking down with complacency, fighting and conquering in his servants, giving to believers as much strength as the receiver believes he can receive; 'he was present in the contest,' says he, 'erected, corroborated, animated his warriors. And he who once conquered death for us, always conquers in us.' Toward the close he consoles, with suitable arguments, those who had not yet been crowned with martyrdom, but were prepared for it in spirit.

"The joy of Cyprian on account of the faithfulness of the martyrs must have been considerably damped by the disorderly conduct which began to take place in his absence. The lapsed Christians offered themselves to some of the presbyters of Carthage, to be received into the church, who admitted them, without any just evi-

* Epis. 9.

dence of their repentance, to the Lord's Supper. Those who had suffered for Christ, and were on the point of martyrdom, and to whom it was usual on these occasions to make application, wrote to Cyprian, and desired that the consideration of these cases might be deferred till the persecution was stopped, and the bishop was restored to his church. He dissembles not his displeasure on this occasion; confesses he had long borne with these disorders for the sake of peace, till he thought it his duty to bear with them no longer; that it was quite unprecedented to transact these things without the consent of the bishop,* that even in lesser offences a regular time of penitence was exacted of the members, a certain course of discipline took place, they made open confession of their sins, and were readmitted to communion by the imposition of hands of the bishop and his clergy. He directs that the irregular practice may be stopped, till on his return every thing might be settled with propriety.

“ Some of the martyrs themselves, it appears,† acted very inconsiderately in this business, and gave commendatory papers to lapsed persons, conceived in general terms. Cyprian wishes them to express the names of the persons, and to give no such recommendations to any but those of whose sincere repentance they had some good proof, and yet refer the cognizance of affairs to the bishop.

“ Every thing has two handles. Mosheim, in his Ecclesiastical History, represents Cyprian as stretching the episcopal power beyond its due bounds. I see no evi-

* A farther confirmation of the antiquity of the reduced episcopal mode of government in the church of Christ.

† Epis. 11.

dence of his exceeding the powers of his predecessors. And a pious care for the good of souls, not any ambition for the extension of his own authority, seems to influence his mind in these things; but of this the learned reader must judge for himself, who will take the pains to examine his epistles with attention. But the English reader may judge for himself by the following letter, and ask his own heart, whether it is the language of a tender father of the church, or of an imperious lord.

Cyprian to the Brethren of the Laity, greeting:

“ ‘I know from myself that you groan over and grieve for the ruins of our people, dearest brethren, as I groan over and grieve with you for each of them, and feel what the blessed apostle said, ‘Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?’ and again he says, ‘If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.’ I sympathize and condole with our brethren, who, lapsing through the violence of persecution, draw with them part of our bowels, and by their wounds have brought acute pain to us. Divine grace is able indeed to heal them; yet I think we should not be in a hurry, nor do any thing incautiously and precipitately, lest, while we rashly admit them into communion, the divine displeasure be more grievously incurred. The blessed martyrs have written to us, begging that their desires may be examined, when, the Lord vouchsafing us peace, we return to the church; then every thing shall be examined in your presence and with concurrence of your judgments. Yet I hear that some presbyters, neither mindful of the gospel, nor considering what the martyrs have written to us, and in

contempt of the episcopal authority, have already begun to communicate with the lapsed, and to administer the Lord's Supper to them, in defiance of that legitimate order by which alone they should be admitted. For if in lesser faults this be observed, much more in evils like these which radically affect Christian profession itself. Our presbyters and deacons ought to admonish them of this, that they may cherish the sheep intrusted to them, and instruct them in the way of salvation by divine rules. I have too good opinion of the peaceable and humble disposition of our people to believe that they would have ventured to take such a step, had they not been seduced by the adulatory arts of some of the clergy.

“ ‘Do you then take care of each of them, and by your judgment and moderation, according to divine precepts, moderate the spirits of the lapsed; let none pluck off fruit as yet unripe with improvident precipitation; let none commit a vessel again to the deep, shattered already and leaky, till it be carefully refitted; let none put on his tattered garment, till he see it thoroughly repaired. I beseech them to attend to our counsel, and expect our return, that when we shall come to you by the mercy of God, we may examine the letters and the desires of the martyrs in the presence of the confessors according to the will of the Lord, and with the concurrence of other bishops convened together.’ ”

“His exhortations to his clergy were not without effect. They fell in with his views, and solicited the people to patience, modesty, and real repentance, and asked of him how to act in critical cases, for which he* refers them to the former letters, and repeats his idea of the proper time of settling the concerns of the rest, urging

* Epis. 14

at the same time the indecency of some in expecting a readmission into the church before the return of those, who were in exile, and stripped of all their goods for the sake of the gospel. ‘But if they are in such excessive hurry, it is in their own power to obtain even more than they desire. The battle is not yet over; the conflict is daily carrying on. If they cordially repent, and the fire of divine faith burns in their breasts, he who cannot brook a delay, may, if he please, be crowned with martyrdom.’”

The clergy of the church of Rome, their bishop being dead, looked to Cyprian for counsel. Their conduct concerning the lapsed was more correct than that of the presbyters of Carthage. Writing concerning them they say—“Let them knock at the doors but not break them. Let them go to the threshold of the church, but not leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp, but with that modesty which becomes those who remember they have been deserters. Let them arm themselves indeed with the weapons of humility, and resume that shield of faith which they dropped through the fear of death; but so that they may be armed against the devil, not against the church who grieves at their fall.”

“There was one Aurelius, who twice underwent the rage of persecution for the sake of Christ. Banishment was his first punishment, and torture the second. Cyprian speaks of him as though very young, yet excelling in the graces of Christianity. Him he ordained a reader in the church of Carthage, and excuses, from the circumstances of the case, his not having previously consulted his presbyters and deacons, and beseeches them to pray that both himself and Aurelius may be restored

to them. I cannot but observe from hence how exact and orderly the ideas of ordination were in those times. It is not to the advantage of godliness among us, that any person can now, without ceremony, assume to himself the highest offices in the ministry.*

“It seems, that Cyprian thought proper to reward with honourable establishments in the church, those who had suffered with the greatest faithfulness in the persecution, which was now drawing to a close. Numidicus was advanced to the office of presbyter. He had attended† a great number of martyrs murdered partly with stones and partly by fire. His wife, sticking close by his side, was burnt to death with the rest: himself, half burnt, buried with stones, and left for dead, was found afterwards by his daughter, and drawn out and recovered. This seems to be the effect of a tumultuary persecution. One may conceive that the ferocity of many would not, in those times, wait for legal orders to oppress Christians. What an indefinite number of sufferers must be added to the list of martyrs on this account!

“Amidst all these cares the charity and diligence of Cyprian toward his flock was unremitted. The reader who loves the annals of genuine and active godliness, will not be wearied in seeing still fresh proofs of it in extracts of two letters to his clergy.‡

“ ‘Dear brethren, I salute you, still safe by the grace of God, wishing to come soon to you, that my desire, yours, and that of all the brethren, may be gratified. Whenever, on the settlement of your affairs, you shall write to me that I ought to come, or if the Lord should condescend to shew it me before, then I will come to you; for where can I have more happiness and joy

* Epis. 33.

† Epis. 35.

‡ Epis. 36, 37.

than there, where God appointed me both to believe and to grow up. I beseech you take diligent care of the widows, the sick, and all the poor; and supply also strangers, if any be indigent, with what is needful for them, out of my proper portion which I left with Rogatian the presbyter. And lest that portion by this time should be all spent, I have sent to the same, by Naricus the Acolyth,* another portion, that you may the more readily and largely supply the distressed.

“ Though I know you have been frequently admonished by my letters to show all care for those who have gloriously confessed the Lord and are in prison, yet I must repeatedly entreat the same thing. I wish circumstances permitted my presence among you; with the greatest pleasure would I discharge the offices of love toward you; but do you represent me. A decent care for the interment, not only of those who died in torture, but also of such as died under the pressures of confinement, is necessary. For whoever hath submitted himself to torture and death under the eye of God, hath already suffered all that God would have him suffer. Mark also the days in which they depart this life, that we may celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs. Though our most faithful and devoted friend Tertullus, agreeably to his usual attention and care, (who also attends to their obsequies) hath written, and still writes and intimates to me the days in which the blessed martyrs are transmitted to immortality. And their memorials are here celebrated, and I hope shortly, under divine Providence, to be able to celebrate them with you. Let not your care and diligence be wanting for the poor, who have stood firm

* An inferior officer of the church, signifying an attendant.

in the faith, and fought with us in the Christian warfare. Our love and attention are the more requisite, because neither poverty nor persecution have driven them from the love of Christ.'

"It is obvious to see into what idolatry these commemorations of martyrs afterwards degenerated. But I observe no signs of it in the days of Cyprian. In addition to other evils the providence of God now thought fit to exercise the mind of Cyprian with a calamity, one of the worst to a lover of peace and charity, the rise of a schism.

"* There was one Felicissimus in the church of Carthage, who had long been a secret enemy of the bishop, and a person of very exceptionable character. He had now, by the artifices and blandishments used by seditious persons in all ages, drawn some of the flock to himself, and held communion with them on a certain mountain. Some persons being sent from Cyprian to pay the debts of the poor brethren, and to furnish them with a little money to begin business again, and also to make a report of their ages, conditions, and qualities, that he might select some of them for ecclesiastical offices, Felicissimus opposed them and thwarted both these designs. Some of the poor who came first to be relieved were threatened by him with imperious severity, because they refused to communicate with him on the mountain. This man growing more insolent, and taking advantage of Cyprian's absence, whose return he speedily expected, as the persecution had nearly ceased at Carthage, set up in form an opposition to the bishop, and threatened those who would not communicate with him, and found means to unite a considerable party to himself. To his other

* Epis. 38.

crimes the man had added that of adultery, and now saw no method of preventing an infamous excommunication, but that of setting up as a leader himself. One Augendus was his second, and did his utmost to promote his views. Cyprian by letter expresses his vehement sorrow on account of these evils, promises to take full cognizance of them on his return, and in the mean time he writes to his clergy to suspend from communion Felicissimus and his abettors. And his clergy wrote him in answer, that they had suspended the chiefs of the faction accordingly.*

“In the mean time there were not wanting upright and zealous ministers who instructed the people at Carthage. Among these were distinguished Britius the presbyter, also Rogation and Numidicus, confessors, and some deacons of real godliness. These warned the people of the evils of schism, endeavoured to preserve peace and unity, and to recover the lapsed by wholesome methods. In addition to their labours Cyprian wrote now to the people.† ‘For,’ says he, ‘the malice and perfidy of some presbyters hath effected, that I should not be able to come to you before Easter.‡ But now whence the faction of Felicissimus has been derived, on what foundation it stands, is evident. These encouraged certain confessors, that they should not harmonize with their bishop, nor observe ecclesiastical discipline faithfully and modestly. And as if it were too little for them to have corrupted the minds of confessors, and to arm them against their pastor, and stain the glory of their confession, they turned themselves to poison the spirits of the lapsed, to keep them from the great duty of constant prayer, and to invite them to an unsound and dangerous peace. But I beseech you,

* Epis. 39.

† Epis 40.

‡ In what way they hindered his arriving sooner will appear afterwards.

brethren, watch against the snares of the devil, solicitous for your own salvation; this is a second persecution and temptation. The five seditious presbyters may be justly compared to the five Pagan rulers who lately published some plausible arguments, in conjunction with the magistrates, to subvert souls. The same method is tried by the five presbyters, united with Felicissimus, to ruin your souls, that you should not ask of God; that he who denied Christ should cease to supplicate the same Christ whom he hath denied; that repentance should be removed, and every thing should be conducted in a novel manner against the rules of the gospel.

“My banishment of two years it seems was not sufficient, and my mournful separation, from your presence, my constant grief and perpetual lamentation, and my tears flowing day and night, because the pastor whom you chose, with so much love and zeal could not salute nor embrace you. To my distressed spirit a still greater evil is added, that in so great a solicitude I cannot come over to you. The threats and snares of the perfidious oblige me to caution, lest on my arrival the tumult should increase; and whereas the bishop ought to provide in all things for peace and tranquillity, he himself should seem to have afforded matter for the sedition, and again to exasperate the persecution. Most dear brethren, I beseech you do not give rash credit to pernicious words, nor put darkness for light; they speak, but not from the word of the Lord; they promise to restore the lapsed, who are themselves separated from the church.

“There is one God, one Christ, one church. Depart, I pray you, far from these men, and avoid their discourse as a plague and pestilence. They hinder your prayers and tears by affording you false consolations.

Acquiesce, I beseech you, in our counsel, who pray daily for you, and desire you to be restored to the church by the grace of the Lord. Join your prayers and tears with ours. But if any, careless of repentance, shall betake himself to Felicissimus and his party, let him know that his after-return to the church will be impracticable.”

“But there was another character who was the primary agent in these disagreeable scenes, Novatus a presbyter of Carthage, a man extremely scandalous and immoral.* His domestic crimes had been so notorious as to render him not only no longer fit to be a minister, but even unworthy to be received into lay communion. The examination of his conduct was just going to take place, when the breaking out of Decius’s persecution prevented it. He it was who supported and cherished the views of Felicissimus and the rest, and appears by his address and capacity to have been extremely able to cause much mischief in the church, without the power of benefiting it in the least, from his entire want of conscience and honesty. Felicissimus himself, though at first the ostensible leader of the congregation on the mountain, gave way to Fortunatus, one of the five presbyters, who was constituted bishop in opposition to Cyprian. Most of the five had been already branded with infamy for immoralities. Yet so deep is the corruption of human nature, even where the light of the gospel shines, that even such will find advocates to espouse them against pastors of eminent sanctity, who irritate the corruptions of men by refusing to speak peace where there is no peace. It is no little proof of the strength of these evils, that even a persecution the most dreadful yet recorded in the annals of the church, did not unite Christian professors in love.

One hence sees the necessity for so severe a scourge to the church, and the advantages thence accruing to the real faithful, either by happily removing them to rest, out of a world of sin and vanity, or by promoting their sanctification, if their pilgrimage be prolonged.

“ Novatus, either unwilling to face the bishop of Carthage, or desirous to extend the mischiefs of schism, passed the sea and came to Rome. There he separated from the church a priest named Novatian, a friend of the confessor Moyses, whose sufferings at Rome were of a tedious nature. Moyses renounced his acquaintance on this, and died soon after in prison, where he had been near a year. He entered into full peace at length, having left the evidence of modesty and peaceableness in addition to his other more splendid virtues, as testimonies of his love to the Lord Jesus.

“ Novatus found the ideas of his new partner in religion placed in an extreme opposite to his own. Novatian had been a stoic before he was a Christian, and he still retained the rigour of the sect to such a degree, that he held it wrong to receive those into the church who once had lapsed, though they gave the sincerest marks of repentance. Full of these unwarranted severities, he exclaimed against the unreasonable lenity of the Roman clergy in receiving penitents. Many of the clergy of Rome, who were still in prison for the faith, were seduced by his apparent zeal for church discipline; among others Maximus and others to whom Cyprian had formerly written. These joined Novatian. His African tutor, with astonishing inconsistency, after having stirred up a general indignation in Africa against the bishop for severity to the lapsed, now supported a party who complained of too much lenity at Rome, and de-

tended two extremes, it is hard to say which is the worse, with equal pertinacity within the compass of two years.

“ The Roman clergy thought it high time to stem the torrent. They had for sixteen months* with singular piety and fortitude governed the church during one of its most stormy seasons. Schism was now added to persecution; to be chosen bishop of Rome was plainly for a man to expose himself to martyrdom; for Decius threatened bishops with great haughtiness and asperity. Sixteen bishops happening to be then at Rome, ordained Cornelius as the successor of Fabian. He was very unwilling to accept the office; but the election of a bishop to withstand the growing schism appeared necessary, and the people who were present approved of his ordination.

“ Novatian procured himself to be ordained bishop, in opposition, in a very regular manner,† and vented calumnies against Cornelius, whose life appears to have been worthy of the gospel.

“ Thus was formed the first body of Christians, who, in modern language, ought to be called *Dissenters*, that is, men who separate from the general church, not on grounds of doctrine, but of discipline. The Novatianists held no opinions contrary to the faith of the gospel. It is certain, from some writings of Novatian extant,‡ that their leader was sound in the doctrine of the Trinity. But the confessors, whom his pretensions to superior§ purity had seduced, returned afterwards to the communion of Cornelius, and wept over their own credulity.

* Fleury, b. 6.

† See in Eusebius, b. 6, Cornelius's letter concerning Novitian, whom Eusebius confounds with Novatus by mistake.

‡ See Waterland's Importance of the Trinity.

§ Epis. 48 and 49.

In a letter of Cornelius to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, we have occasionally the mention of a few circumstances which may give an idea of the church of Rome at that time.* There were under the bishop forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolyths, fifty-two exorcists, and readers with porters, widows, and impotent persons, above 1050 souls.

“ The number of the laity was, says he, innumerable. I don’t know so authentic a memorial of the numbers of the Christians in those times. In his letter he charges Novatian, perhaps without sufficient warrant, with having denied himself to be a priest during the heat of the persecution, and with obliging his separatists, when he administered to them the Lord’s Supper, to swear to adhere to him. He was daily more and more forsaken, and the party at Rome lost ground. In Africa, whither Novatus returned, the party held up its head, and ordained Nicostratus the deacon, the only person of note, who was seduced at Rome by Novatian, and who refused to return to communion with Cornelius. Conscious of scandalous crimes,† he fled from Rome and became bishop of the Novatians in Africa.

“ It would not have been worth while to have detailed these events thus distinctly, but to mark the symptoms of declension in the church, the unity of which was now broken for the first time; for it ought not to be thought that all the Novatians were men void of the faith and love of Jesus. The artifices of Satan also, in pushing forward opposite extremes, are worthy of notice. He tried both the lax and the severe method in point of discipline. The former he finds more suitable to the state

* About the middle of the third century.

† The Novatians called themselves Cathari, pure people.

of Christianity among us. But it could gain no solid footing in the third century. The Novatian schism stood at last on the ground of excessive severity, a certain proof of the strictness of discipline then fashionable among Christians, and of course of great purity of life and doctrine having been prevalent among them; but to refuse the readmission of penitents was a dangerous instance of pharisaical pride, though in justice to Novatian it ought to be mentioned that he advised the exhorting of the lapsed to repentance, and then leaving them to the judgment of God. But extreme austerity and superstition were now growing evils, and cherished by false philosophy. On the same plan Novatian also condemned second marriages.

“At length Cyprian ventured out of his retreat and returned to Carthage.”

The incursions of the Goths gave rest to the Christians. The anger of God was so manifest, that their enemies were called to mourn.

During this interval, a council was held at Carthage. Novatian was rejected, and Felicissimus and his five presbyters condemned. The lapsed who were penitent were restored, and every method of Christian charity adopted to facilitate the return of those whose repentance was doubtful. Under the faithful Cyprian the church recovered her purity.

CHAPTER VII.

Persecutions in the East.

“THE Gentile church of Jerusalem still maintained its respectability under Alexander its bishop. He was

again called on to confess Christ before the tribunal of the president at Cæsarea, and in this second trial of his faith, having acquitted himself with his usual fidelity, he was cast into prison. His venerable locks procured him no pity nor respect, and he finally breathed out his soul under confinement.*

“At Antioch, Babylas after his confession dying in bonds, Fabius was chosen his successor. In this persecution the renowned Origen was called to suffer extremely. Bonds, torments, a dungeon, the pressure of an iron chair, the distension of his feet for many days, the threats of burning, and other evils were inflicted by his enemies, which he manfully endured. All these things ended at last in the preservation of his life, the judge solicitously taking care that his tortures should not kill him. ‘What words he uttered on these occasions, and how useful to those who need consolation, many of his epistles,’ says Eusebius, ‘declare with no less truth than accuracy.’ Were they now extant, more light, I apprehend, might be thrown on the internal character of Origen, in respect to experimental godliness, than by all his works which remain. These show the scholar, the philosopher, and the critic. Those would have shown the Christian. This great man died in his seventieth year, about the same time as the Emperor Decius. An estimate of his character I shall find occasion to insert by and by.

“Dionysius was at this time bishop of Alexandria, a person of great and deserved renown in the church; we are obliged to Eusebius for a few of his remains, some of which being historical, must be here inserted. In an epistle to Germanus he speaks thus: ‘Sabinus

* Euseb. b. 6, from c. 39 to the end.

the Roman governor sent an officer to seek me, during the persecution of Decius, and I remained four days at home, expecting his coming; he made the most accurate search in the roads, the rivers, and the fields where he suspected I might be hid. A confusion seems to have seized him, that he could not find my house; for he had no idea that a man in my circumstances should stay at home. At length, after four days, God ordered me to remove,* and having opened me a way contrary to all expectation, I and my servants and many of the brethren went together. The event showed the whole was the work of divine Providence. About sunset, being seized together with my company by the soldiers, I was led to Taposiris. But my friend Timotheus, by the providence of God, was not present, nor was he seized. But, coming afterwards, he found my house forsaken, and ministers guarding it, and that we were taken captive. How wonderful was the dispensation! but it shall be related with truth. A countryman met Timotheus flying in confusion, and asked the cause of his hurry; he told him the truth: the peasant hearing it, went away to a nuptial feast; for in them the custom was to watch all night. He informed the guests of what he had heard. At once they all rose up, as by a signal, and ran quickly to us, and shouted; our soldiers, struck with a panic, fled, and the invaders found us as we were on naked beds. I first thought they must have been a company of robbers, and remaining on my bed in my linen garment, reached to them the rest of my apparel, which was just by. They ordered me to rise and go out quickly. At length, understanding their real designs, I cried out, entreating them earnestly to depart, and let us alone. But if they

* By a vision, or some other divine manifestation, I suppose.

really meant any kindness to us, I begged them to prevent my persecutors and take off my head. They compelled me to rise by plain violence, and I threw myself on the ground. They, seizing my hands and feet, pulled me out by force; I was set on an ass, and conducted from the place.' In so remarkable a manner was this useful life preserved to the church. We shall see it was not in vain.

“ In an epistle to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, he gives this account of the persecution at Alexandria, which had preceded the Decian persecution a whole year, and which must have happened therefore under Philip, the most open friend of Christians. ‘ A certain augur and poet took pains to stir up the malice of the Gentiles against us, and to inflame them with zeal for the support of their superstitions. Stimulated by him, and giving free course to their licentiousness, they deemed the murder of Christians to be the only piety and worship of demons. They first seized one Metras, an old man, and ordered him to blaspheme; he refusing, they beat him with clubs, and pricked his face and eyes with sharp reeds; and, dragging him to the suburbs, they there stoned him. Then hurrying one Quinta, a faithful woman, to the idol temple, they insisted on her worshipping. To which she showing the strongest marks of abomination, fastening her by the feet, they dragged her over the rough pavement through all the city, having first dashed her against mill-stones, and whipping her, led her to the same place and despatched her. Then, with one accord, they all rushed on the houses of the godly; and every one ran to his neighbours’, spoiled, and plundered them, purloining the most valuable of their goods, and throwing away those things which were vile

and refuse, and burning them in the roads, and thus exhibiting the appearance of a captive and spoiled city. The brethren fled and withdrew themselves, and received with joy the spoiling of their goods, as those did to whom Paul beareth witness, and I do not know, that any except one falling into their hands, hitherto denied the Lord; but having seized the admirable aged virgin Apollonia, beating her cheeks they dashed out all her teeth, and having kindled a fire before the city, they threatened to burn her alive, unless she would consent to blaspheme. But she begged a little intermission, quickly leaped into the fire, and was consumed. Having seized Serapion in his house, and tortured him, and broken all his limbs, they threw him headlong from an upper room. No road, public or private, was passable to us, by night or by day; all of them crying out always and every where, that if they would not speak blasphemy, they should be thrown into the flames, and these evils continued a long time. A sedition then succeeded, and a civil war, which averted their fury from us, and turned it against one another, and we breathed again a little during the mitigation of their rage. Immediately the change of government was announced. Persecuting Decius succeeded Philip our protector, and we were threatened with destruction; and the edict against us appeared, that foretold by our Lord so dreadful as to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.* All were astonished, many Christians of quality showed themselves immediately through fear; others, who held public offices, were constrained by their office to exhibit themselves; and others were drawn along by their Gentile relations; and being cited by name, they approached to the unholy altars:

* It is evident that this application of our Lord's words is a mistake.

some pale and trembling, not as if they were going to sacrifice, but themselves to be the victims; so that they were derided by the multitude who stood around, and it was visible to all that they were very much frightened both at death and at the crime of sacrificing; but some ran more readily to the altar, affirming boldly, that they never had been Christians. Of such our Lord affirmed most truly, that they should be saved with great difficulty.* Of the rest some followed one or other of these, others fled, others were seized, and of these some persisting to bonds and imprisonment, some of them having been confined many days, at last, before they were led to the tribunal, abjuring the faith, others of them enduring torments for a time, at length yielded. But the firm and stable pillars of the Lord, being strengthened by him, and having received vigour and courage analogous and correspondent to the strong faith which was in them, became admirable martyrs of his kingdom. The first of these was Julian, a gouty person who could neither stand nor walk; he was brought forth with two others who carried him; one of whom immediately denied Christ. The other, called Cronion the benevolent, and old Julian himself, having confessed the Lord, were led through the whole city, very large as ye know it is, sitting on camels, and scourged, and were at last burnt in a very hot fire in the view of surrounding multitudes. A soldier, one Besas, standing by them, and defending them against insults, incensed the mob against himself, and having played the man in the service of his God, had his head struck off. An African by birth, called Macar,† and truly meriting the appellation, having resisted much importu-

* I suppose he means because they were rich.

† Happy or blessed.

nity, was burnt alive. After these Epimachus and Alexander, having long sustained imprisonment and undergone a thousand tortures, were burnt to death, and with these four women. Ammonarion, an holy virgin, being grievously tormented by the judge for having declared beforehand that she would not repeat the blasphemy which he ordered, and persisting faithful, was led away to execution. The rest, the venerable ancient Mercuria, and Dyonisia, mother of many children, but not loving them above the Lord, and another Ammonarion, the president being ashamed to torment them in vain, and to be baffled by women, were slain with the sword, without being exposed first to any torments; for their leader Ammonarion had undergone torture for them all. Heron, Ater, and Isidore, Egyptians, and with them a boy, Dioscorus, of fifteen, were brought before the tribunal: the boy resisted both the blandishments and tortures which were applied to him; the rest, after cruel torments, were burnt. The boy having answered in the wisest manner to all questions, and excited the admiration of the judge, was dismissed by him from motives of compassion, with an intimation of hope that he might afterwards repent. And now the excellent Dioscorus is with us, reserved to a greater and longer conflict. Nemesian was first accused as a partner of robbers; but having cleared himself before the centurion of this accusation, and being informed against as a Christian, he came bound before the president, who most unjustly scourging him with twice the severity used against malefactors, burnt him among robbers. Thus was he honoured to resemble Christ in suffering.

“ And now some of the military guard, Ammon, Zeno, Ptolemy, and Ingenuus, and with them old Theophilus,

stood before the tribunal, and a certain person being interrogated as a Christian, and seeming inclined to deny, they made such lively signs of aversion as to strike the beholders; but before they could be seized, they ran to the tribunal, owning themselves Christians, so that the governor and his assessors were astonished. These evidently had the ascendant over the judges, and went to execution with all the marks of exultation, God triumphing gloriously in them.

“ ‘Many others through the towns and villages were torn to pieces by the Gentiles. One Ischyron was an agent to a certain magistrate, who being ordered to sacrifice, refused; and, after repeated indignities, was killed by a great stake driven through his bowels. But why need I mention the multitude of those who, wandering in deserts and mountains, were destroyed by famine, and thirst, and cold, and diseases, and robbers, and wild beasts? of whom those who survived are witnesses of their election and victory. Suffice it to relate one fact: There was one Chæremon, a very aged person, bishop of the city of Nilus. He, flying into an Arabian mountain with his wife, returned not; nor could the brethren, after much searching, discover them alive or dead, and many about the same Arabian mountain were led captive by the Barbarian Saracens, some of which were afterwards redeemed for money with difficulty, others could never regain their liberty.’ Dionysius adds something of the charity of the martyrs towards the lapsed, contrasting it with the inexorable severity of Novatian.”

“ It seems to have been the whole employment of magistrates to persecute. Swords, wild beasts, pits, red-hot chairs, wheels to stretch the bodies, and talons of iron to tear them; these were the instruments of this persecution.

Malice and covetousness were deeply and strongly set on work during this whole short, but horrible reign in informing against Christians. And the genius of men was never known to have had more of employment in aiding the savageness of the heart. Life was prolonged in torture, that impatience in suffering might effect at length what surprise and terror could not.

“See two examples of Satanic artifice. A martyr having endured the rack and burning plates, the judge ordered him to be rubbed all over with honey, and then exposed him in the sun, which was very hot, lying on his back, with his hands tied behind him, that he might be stung by the flies. Another person, young and in the flower* of his age, was, by the order of the same judge, carried into a pleasant garden among flowers, near a pleasing rivulet surrounded with trees; here they laid him on a feather bed, bound him with silken cords, and left him alone. Then they brought thither a lewd woman very handsome, who began to embrace him and to court him with all imaginable impudence. The martyr bit off his tongue, not knowing how to resist the assaults of sensuality any longer, and spit it in her face. Shocking as these things were, Christianity appeared what it is, true holiness; while its persecutors shewed that they were at enmity with all goodness.*

“Alexander, bishop of Comana, suffered martyrdom by fire. At Smyrna, Eudemon the bishop apostatized, and several unhappily followed his example. But the glory of this church, once so celebrated by the voice of infallibility,† was not totally lost.”

“In Asia one Maximus a merchant was brought before Optimus the proconsul, who inquired after his condition?

* Jerom vita Paul.

† Rev. c. ii. ver. 8, 9, &c.

‘I was born free,’ says he, ‘but I am the servant of Jesus Christ.’ ‘Of what profession are you?’ ‘A man of the world, who live by my dealings.’ ‘Are you a Christian?’ ‘Though a sinner, yet I am a Christian.’ The usual process was carried on of persuasions and tortures. ‘These are not torments which we suffer for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; they are wholesome unctions.’ Such the effect of the Holy Ghost shedding the love of God in Christ abroad in the human heart! He was ordered to be stoned to death.”*

This persecution was, doubtless, salutary to the church.

“The peace of thirty years had corrupted the whole Christian atmosphere. The lightning of the Decian rage refined and cleared it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Cyprian.—His Energy of Faith.—His Martyrdom.

DECIUS dying in 251, Gallus, his successor, gave a short interval of peace to the church. But the flame broke forth afresh. Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, was banished, and died in exile. Cyprian wrote to him in the true spirit of a Christian hero, commending the conduct of the Roman disciples and exhorting him to firmness.

“We have known, dearest brother, the glorious testimonies of your faith and virtue, and we have received the honour of your confession with such exultation, that, in the praises of your excellent conduct, we reckon ourselves partners and companions. For, as we have but one church, united hearts and indivisible concord, what pastor rejoices not in the honour of his fellow-pastors as his own?

* Fleury, b. 6—40.

Or what brotherhood does not every where exult in the joy of brothers?" "

He wrote also an animating letter to the people of Thibaris, exhorting them to firmness under suffering.

"Let no one"—is his language—"Let no one, when he sees our people to be scattered through fear of persecution, be disturbed; because he sees not the brethren collected, nor the bishops employed among them. Those who must not kill, and who must be killed, cannot be all together. Wherever in those days any one of the brethren shall be separated from the flock by the necessity of the time, in body, nor in spirit, let him not be moved at the horror of the flight, nor while he retreats and lies hid be terrified at the solitude of the desert. He is not alone to whom Christ is a companion in flight. He is not alone who, keeping the temple of God, wherever he is, is not without God; and if a robber oppress a Christian, flying in the desert and mountains, a wild beast attack, famine, thirst, or cold afflict, or the tempest oppress by sea, Christ beholds his soldier fighting in all these various ways.' "

"O what a glorious day will come, when the Lord shall begin to recount his people, and adjudge their rewards; to send the guilty into hell, and to condemn our persecutors to the perpetual fire of penal flame, and to bestow on us the reward of faith and devotedness to him. What glory! what joy! to be admitted to see God, to be honoured, to partake of the joy of eternal light and salvation with Christ the Lord your God; to salute Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the patriarchs, and prophets, apostles, and martyrs; to joy with the righteous, the friends of God, in the pleasures of immortality. When that revelation shall come, when the beauty of God shall shine

upon us, we shall be as happy as the deserters and rebellious will be miserable in inextinguishable fire.' ”

“Lucius was chosen bishop of Rome instead of Cornelius, but was immediately driven into exile by the authority of Gallus. Cyprian congratulated him both on his promotion and on his sufferings. His exile must have been of short duration. He was permitted to return to Rome in the year 252, and a second congratulatory letter was written to him by Cyprian.* He suffered death however soon after, and was succeeded by Stephen. The episcopal seat at Rome was then, it seems, the next door to martyrdom.”

The peculiar excellence of the gospel was displayed by active charity as well as by suffering. A terrible pestilence having reached Carthage, and so multiplied its ravages as that the bodies of the dead lay in the streets, Cyprian assembled the church and expatiated on the duty of Christians. “We,” said he, “ought to answer to our birth, and those, who appear to be born again of God, should not degenerate, but should be solicitous to evidence the genuineness of their relation to God by the imitation of his goodness.” Large contributions were made, and the pagans were astonished at the liberality of the gospel. They cared not even for their own, but believers provided for their own and for them also.

In his preaching, Cyprian continued to be faithful. He improved every event as an additional opportunity of calling souls to the Redeemer, and, while himself steadfastly following the upward path, he invited all to join him. He strove to chase the fear of death by making the future present, and rousing all to seek after a lively faith. He was not one who made this world his solace,

* Epis. 58.

or its votaries his friend.—Take up thy cross, was the continual language both of his lips and his life. Born for a better land, and of a nobler origin, he acted as sensible of his high destiny, and his glorious reward. He was active, but it was to bless. He was a conqueror, but it was over Satan.

The church in Numidia having suffered by the eruption of barbarous nations, and many of his members been carried captive, his sympathies awoke, and he not only prayed for but wrote to them and sent them contributions.

Gallus being slain in 253, Valerian succeeded him. He was a friend to believers.

During his reign, a council of 66 bishops, with Cyprian at their head, was held in Africa. Of two things attended to in this council we have account. A presbyter having been improperly received into the church by his bishop, without sufficient trial and without the concurrence and consent of the people, the bishop was reprimanded. A question having arisen concerning infants, the following sentence was passed:

“ ‘ As to the care of infants, of whom you said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the ancient law of circumcision should be so far repeated, that they ought not to be baptized till the eighth day, we were all of a very different opinion. The mercy and grace of God we all judged should be denied to none. For if the Lord says in his gospel, *the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*, how ought we to do our utmost, as far as in us lies, that no soul be lost! Spiritual circumcision should not be impeded by carnal circumcision. If even to the foulest offenders, when they afterwards believe, remission of sins is granted, and none is

prohibited from baptism and grace: how much more should an infant be admitted, who, just born, hath not sinned at all, except that being carnally born according to Adam, he hath contracted the contagion of ancient death in his first birth; who approaches to remission of sins the more easily, because not his own actual guilt, but that of another, is remitted.

“ “ Our sentence therefore, dearest brother, in the council was, that none by us should be prohibited from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful and kind to all.”

This fact proves to us the universality of infant baptism. The question was not whether infants had a right to church membership, but simply whether they should be received immediately after birth, or kept until eight days old.

The sentiments of primitive Christians concerning plays and theatres, is expressed by the following.

“ “ *Cyprian to Eucratius his brother.* Health. Your love and esteem have induced you, dearest brother, to consult me as to what I think of the case of a player among you; who still continues in the same infamous art, and as a teacher of boys, not to be instructed but to be ruined by him, instructs others in that which he himself hath miserably learnt. You ask whether he should be allowed the continuance of Christian communion? I think it very inconsistent with the majesty of God, and the rules of his gospel, that the modesty and honour of the church should be defiled by so base and infamous a contagion. In the law men are prohibited to wear female attire, and are pronounced accursed; how much more criminal must it be not only to put on women's garments, but also to express lascivious, obscene, and effeminate gestures in a way of instructing others!

“And let no man excuse himself as having left the theatre, while yet he undertakes to qualify others for the work. You cannot say that he has ceased from a business, who provides substitutes in his room, and instead of one only, furnishes the playhouse with a number; teaching them, contrary to the divine ordinance, how the male may be reduced into a female and the sex be changed by art; and how Satan may be gratified by the defilement of the divine workmanship. If the man makes poverty his excuse, his necessities may be relieved in the same manner as those of others, who are maintained by the alms of the church, provided he be content with frugal, but innocent food, and do not fancy that we are to hire him by a salary to cease from sin, since it is not our interest, but his own, that is concerned in this affair. But let his gains from the service of the playhouse be ever so large, what sort of gain is that, which tears men from a participation in the banquet of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and leads them miserably and ruinously fattened in this world to the punishments of eternal famine and thirst? Therefore, as much as you can, recover him from this depravity and infamy to the way of innocence and to the hope of life, that he may be content with a parsimonious, but salutary maintenance from the church. But if your church be insufficient to maintain its poor, he may transfer himself to us,* and here receive what is necessary for food and raiment, and no longer teach pernicious things out of the church, but learn himself salutary things in the church. Dearest son, I wish you constant prosperity.’”†

* Eucratius was the bishop of a place called Thenæ, lying in the military road to Carthage.

† 61 Ep. Pam.

“ There was one Fortunatian, bishop of Assuræ, who had lapsed in the time of persecution, and without any marks of repentance still assumed to himself the episcopal character, and insisted on his being received as such by the clergy and people. This case gave occasion to an epistle of Cyprian to the church,* in which he as strenuously opposes the ambitious claims of the bishop as in like circumstances he had formerly done those of the laity, and he repeats the advice to the lapsed he had before given, cautioning the people against the reception of him in that character. Behold now the strenuous assertor of the rights of faithful bishops openly exposing the pretensions of unworthy ones, and instructing the people to guard themselves against their delusions! What effect his epistle had does not appear; the weight of his character and the vigour of discipline, now happily prevalent in Africa, make it probable that it had the desired success.

“ One Rogatian, an African bishop, complained to Cyprian and his colleagues, assembled in a synod, of the insolent and injurious behaviour of a deacon. Cyprian observes, that he might have done himself justice without them. He applies the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to this of the haughty deacon, and takes notice very properly of the humble and unassuming carriage of our Lord toward the impious dignitaries of the Jewish church. ‘ He taught us,’ says he, ‘ how true pastors ought to be fully and regularly honoured, while he behaved himself so towards false ones.’ ”

Valerian, the friend of the Christians, became their foe. Led away by a favourite, he commenced a persecution in which Cyprian perished.

* Epis. 64.

“He was seized by the servants of Paternus the proconsul of Carthage, and brought into his council-chamber. ‘The sacred emperors, Valerian and Gallienus,’ says Paternus, ‘have done me the honour to direct letters to me, in which they have decreed, that all men ought to adore the gods whom the Romans adore, and on pain of being slain with the sword. I have heard that you despise the worship of the gods, whence I advise you to consult for yourself and honour them.’ ‘I am a Christian,’ replied the prelate, ‘and know no god but the one true God, who created heaven and earth, the sea, and all things in them. This God we Christians serve; to him we pray night and day for all men, and even for the emperors.’ ‘You shall die the death of a malefactor, if you persevere in this inclination.’* ‘That is a good inclination which fears God,’ answered Cyprian, ‘and therefore must not be changed.’ ‘You must then, by the will of the princes, be banished.’ ‘He is no exile,’ it was replied, ‘who has God in his heart, for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.’ Paternus said, ‘Before you go, tell me where are your presbyters, who are said to be in this city?’ With much presence of mind Cyprian reminded him of the edicts made by the best Roman princes against the practice of informers: ‘They ought not therefore to be discovered by me, but you may find them, and you yourselves do not approve of men offering themselves voluntarily to you.’ ‘I will make you discover them by torments.’ ‘By me,’ the intrepid bishop rejoined, ‘they shall not be discovered.’ ‘Our princes have ordered that Christians hold no conventicles, and whoever breaks this rule shall

* The Passion of Cyprian in Pam. Edit. Fleury’s Hist. b. 7.

be put to death.' 'Do what you are ordered,' Cyprian calmly replied.

"Paternus however was not disposed to hurt Cyprian. Most probably he respected the character of the man, which by this time must have been highly esteemed, through a shining series of good works in Africa. Having made some ineffectual attempts to work on his fears, he sent him into banishment to Curubis, a little town fifty miles from Carthage, situate by the sea, over against Sicily. The place was healthy, the air good, and by his own desire he had private lodgings. The citizens of Curubis, during the eleven months which he lived among them, treated him with great kindness, and he was repeatedly visited by Christians. Here he served his Divine Master in good works, and Paternus in the interim died.

"While he was here he heard that the persecutors had seized nine bishops, with several priests and deacons and a great number of the faithful, even virgins and children, and after beating them with sticks, had sent them to work in the copper-mines in the mountains. Every one of these bishops had been present at the last council of Carthage, and their names were Nemesius, Felix, Lucius, a second Felix, Liteus, Polus, Victor, Jader, and Dativus."

He addressed them by letter—

"Your glory required, blessed and beloved brethren, that I ought to come and embrace you, were it not that the confession of the same name has confined me also to this place: but I exhibit myself to you as well as I can, and if it is forbidden me to come to you in body, yet I come in spirit and affection, expressing my soul in letters, how I exult in your honours, reckoning myself

a partner with you, though not in suffering, yet in the fellowship of love. How can I hold my peace when I know such glorious things of my dearest brethren, with which the divine appointment hath honoured you; part of you having already been consummated in martyrdom, who will receive a crown of righteousness from the Lord, and the rest as yet in prisons, or in mines, and bonds, exhibiting by the tediousness of punishment greater arguments to arm and strengthen the brethren, by the retardation of torments advancing to a higher proficiency in Christian glory, and sure to receive in heaven according to their sufferings.

“ ‘ In truth, that the Lord has thus honoured you affords me no surprise when I consider the blameless course of your faith in the church, your firm adherence to the divine ordinance, your integrity, concord, humility, diligence, mercy in cherishing the poor, constancy in defence of the truth, and strictness of Christian discipline; and that nothing might be wanting in you as patterns of good works even now in the confession of your voice, and in the sufferings of the body, you stir up the minds of the brethren to divine martyrdom, by exhibiting yourselves as leaders of goodness, so that while the flock follow their pastor and imitate their presidents, they may be crowned in like manner by the Lord. That you have been grievously beaten by clubs, and have been initiated by that punishment in Christian confession, is a thing not to be lamented. The body of a Christian trembles not on account of clubs, all whose hope is in *wood*.* The servant of Christ acknowledges the em-

* I once for all observe, that the want of a just classical taste, in comparison of that of the Augustan age, and the excess of false rhetorical ornaments, every where appear in Cyprian. This was the property not of the man, but of the times, and the meanness of the pun in this place will be forgiven by all who relish the preciousness of the doctrine connected with it.

blem of his salvation; redeemed by wood to eternal life, by wood he is advanced to the crown. O feet, embarrassed with fetters indeed, but quickly about to run to Christ in a glorious course! Let malice and cruelty fetter you as they please, quickly you will come from earth and its sorrows to the kingdom of heaven. In those mines the body is not refreshed by a bed, but Christ is its consolation and rest; your limbs, fatigued with labours, lie on the ground; but to lie down with Christ is no punishment. Filth and dirt defile your limbs, void of the cleansing bath; but you are inwardly washed from all uncleanness. Your allowance of bread is but scanty; but man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. You have no proper clothes to fence you from the cold; but he who has put on Christ is clothed abundantly.’”

“Nemesian and the other bishops returned him an answer full of affection and gratitude, from three different places in which they were confined, in which they acknowledge the pecuniary assistance which Cyprian sent them. He wrote also to Rogatian the younger, and other confessors who were in prison, most probably at Carthage, animating them in his usual manner ‘to spurn present punishment through the hope of future joys.’ He speaks with much pleasure also of some women and boys who were partners of their sufferings. He recommends to them the example of the elder Rogatian and the ever quiet and sober Felicissimus,* who had consummated their martyrdom already.

“In the year 260, Cyprian, returning from exile by permission, lived in a garden near Carthage, which was

* I suppose he thus distinguishes him from the factious Felicissimus, Epis. 81.

now providentially restored to him, though he had sold it at his first conversion. His liberal spirit would have inclined him once more to sell it for the relief of the needy, had he not feared to attract the envy of the persecutors. Here he regulated the affairs of the church, and distributed to the poor what he had left. Here he understood that the persecution, after a little interval, was broken out afresh, and hearing various reports, he sent some to Rome to gain certain information. From these he learnt, what he immediately communicated to the brethren,* that Valerian had given orders that bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be put to death without delay; that senators, noblemen, and knights should be degraded and deprived of their property, and if they still persisted to be Christians, should lose their lives; that women of quality should be deprived of their property and banished; that all Cæsar's freedmen who should have confessed, should be stripped of their goods, chained and sent to work on his estates. These were Valerian's orders to the senate, and thus he wrote to the governors of provinces: 'These letters we daily expect to arrive, standing in the firmness of faith, in patient expectation of suffering, and hoping from the Lord's help and kindness, the crown of eternal life.' He mentions also the news he had heard of the martyrdom of Xixtus the bishop of Rome, and the daily ferocity with which the persecution was carried on at Rome in all its horrors. He begs that the intelligence may be circulated through Africa, 'That we may all think of death, not more than immortality, and in the fulness of faith may rather rejoice at than fear the event.'

“Galerius Maximus had succeeded Paternus in the

* Epis. 82.

proconsulate, and Cyprian was daily expected to be sent for. In this awful crisis a number of senators and others, considerable for their offices or their quality, came to him. Ancient friendship melted the minds of some of them toward the man, and they offered to conceal him in country places, but his soul was now athirst for martyrdom."

"He continued still at Carthage exhorting the faithful, and wishing that when he should suffer martyrdom, death might find him thus employed for his God. However being informed that the proconsul, then at Utica, had sent some soldiers to bring him thither, he was induced to comply for a season with the advice of his friends, to retire to some place of concealment, that he might not suffer at Utica, but if he was called to martyrdom might finish his life among his own people at Carthage; so he states the matter in the last of his letters to the clergy and people. 'Here,' says he, 'in this concealment I wait for the return of the proconsul to Carthage, ready to appear before him, and to say what shall be given me at the hour. Do you, dear brethren, do you agreeably to the discipline you have always received, and to the instructions you have learnt from me, continue still and quiet; let none of you excite any tumult on account of the brethren, or offer himself voluntarily to the Gentiles. He who is seized and delivered up ought to speak; the Lord in us will speak at that hour; and confession rather than profession is our duty.'

"The proconsul being returned to Carthage, Cyprian returned to his garden; while he was there, two officers with soldiers came to seize him. They carried him in a chariot between them to a place called Sextus, six miles from Carthage, by the sea side, where the pro-

consul lodged, indisposed. The proconsul deferred the affair till the next day, and he was carried back to the lodgings of the chief of the officers about the distance of a stadium from the prætorium. The news spread through Carthage; his celebrity on account of his good works drew prodigious crowds to the scene, not only of Christians, but of infidels, who revered the virtue of the man.

“The chief of the officers guarded him, but in a courteous manner; so that he ate with his friends, and had them about him as usual. The Christians passed the night in the street before his lodgings, and the charity of Cyprian moved him to direct a particular attention to be paid to the young women who were among the crowd. The next day the proconsul sent for Cyprian, who went to the prætorium attended by crowds of people. The proconsul not yet appearing, he was ordered to wait for him in a private place, where he sat down. Being in a great perspiration, a soldier, who had been a Christian, offered him fresh clothes. ‘Shall we,’ says Cyprian, ‘seek for a remedy for that which may last no longer than to-day.’

“He was at length brought into the judgment-hall, where the proconsul sat. ‘Are you Thascius Cyprian?’ ‘I am.’ ‘Are you he whom the Christians call their bishop?’ ‘I am.’ ‘Our princes have ordered you to worship the gods.’ ‘That I shall not do.’ ‘You will do better to consult your safety, and not despise the gods.’ ‘My safety and virtue is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever.’ ‘I pity your case,’ says the proconsul, ‘and could wish to consult for you.’ ‘I do not wish,’ says the prelate, ‘that things should be otherwise with me, than that adoring my God, I may hasten

to him with all the ardour of my soul; for the afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' The proconsul, now reddening with anger, says, 'You have lived sacrilegiously a long time, and have formed into a society men of an impious conspiracy, and have shown yourself an enemy to the gods and their religion, and have not hearkened to the equitable counsels of our princes, but have ever been a father of the impious sect, and their ringleader; you shall therefore be an example to the rest, and they shall learn their duty by your blood. Let Thascius Cyprian, who refuses to sacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the sword.' 'God be praised,' said the martyr, and while they were leading him away, a multitude of the people followed and cried, 'Let us die with our holy bishop.'

"A troop of soldiers attended him, and the officers marched on each side of him. They led him into a plain surrounded with trees, and many climbed up to the top of them to see him at a distance. Cyprian took off his mantle, and fell on his knees and worshipped his God; then he put off his inner garment and remained in his shirt. The executioner being come, Cyprian ordered twenty-five golden denarii to be given him; he himself bound the napkin over his eyes, and a presbyter and deacon tied his hands for him, and the Christians laid before him napkins and handkerchiefs to receive his blood. Then his head was cut off by the sword.*

* Acts of his Martyrdom, Passion of Cyprian in Pam., Pontius' Life of Cyprian, and Fleury's History.

CHAPTER IX.

Fruits of Faith.—Peace to the Church.—Heretics.

THE bishop of Rome having suffered martyrdom, as well as Cyprian, the prefect, moved by an idle report of the immense riches of the Roman church, sent for Laurentius, the chief deacon, “and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, ‘Give me a little time to set every thing in order, and to take an account of each particular.’ The prefect granted him three day’s time. In that space Laurentius collected all the poor who were supported by the Roman church, and going to the prefect, said, ‘Come, behold the riches of our God; you shall see a large court full of golden vessels.’ The prefect followed him, but seeing all the poor people he turned to Laurentius with looks full of anger. ‘What are you displeased at?’ said the martyr; ‘the gold you so eagerly desire is but a vile metal taken out of the earth, and serves as an incitement to all sorts of crimes; the true gold is that Light whose disciples these poor men are. The misery of their bodies is an advantage to their souls; sin is the true disease; the great ones of the earth are the truly poor and contemptible. These are the treasures which I promised you, to which I will add precious stones. Behold these virgins and widows; they are the church’s crown; make use of these riches for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor, and yourself.’”

“At Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, a child named Cyril showed uncommon fortitude. He called on the name of Jesus Christ continually, nor could threats or blows prevent him from owning Christianity. Many children

of his own age persecuted him; and his own father drove him out of his house, with the applauses of many for his zeal in the support of paganism. The judge ordered him to be brought before him, and said, 'My child, I will pardon your faults, your father shall receive you again; it is in your power to enjoy your father's estate, provided you are wise, and take care of your own interest.' 'I rejoice to bear your reproaches,' replied the child, 'God will receive me; I am glad that I am expelled out of our house; I shall have a better mansion; I fear not death, because it will introduce me into a better life.' Divine grace having enabled him to witness this good confession, he was ordered to be bound and led as it were to execution. The judge had given secret orders to bring him back again, hoping that the sight of the fire might overcome his resolution. Cyril remained inflexible. The humanity of the judge induced him still to continue his remonstrances. 'Your fire and your sword,' says the young martyr, 'are insignificant. I go to a better house and more excellent riches; despatch me presently, that I may enjoy them.' The spectators wept through compassion. 'You should rather rejoice,' says he, 'in conducting me to my punishment. You know not what a city I am going to inhabit, nor what is my hope.' Thus he went to his death, and was the admiration of the whole city."

Fruits of faith, equally rich, were exhibited in the church at Antioch, at Alexandria, and elsewhere. The Lord was with his people.

At length in 262, Gallienus, the successor of Valerian, gave the church a respite from persecution. Under him Christians were legally tolerated, and the toleration continued, with very little exception, to the end of the century.

During this period arose Dionysius of Alexandria. The following are his remarks concerning the Sabellian heresy, then beginning to manifest itself.

* “ ‘As many brethren have sent their books and disputations in writing to me concerning the impious doctrine lately sown at Pentapolis in Ptolemais, containing many blasphemies against the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also much infidelity concerning his only begotten Son, the *first begotten of every creature*, and the word incarnate, and also senseless ignorance of the Holy Ghost, some of them I have transcribed and sent the copies to you.’ ”

Writing afterwards on the same subject, he says, “The Father cannot be separated from the Son, as he is the Father; for that name at the same time establishes the relation. Neither can the Son be separated from the Father; for the word Father implies the union; and the Spirit is in their hands, because it cannot exist without him who sends it to him who bears it. Thus we understand the indivisible Unity of the Trinity; and we comprehend the Trinity in the Unity without any diminution.’ This account was satisfactory to the whole church, and was allowed to contain the sense of Christians on the doctrine.”

Returned from exile to Alexandria, he found the city involved in civil war. “On the feast of Easter, as if he was still in banishment, he wrote to his people, who were in another part of the city, with which he could have no intercourse. Writing to Hierax, an Egyptian bishop at some distance, he says, ‘It is not to be wondered at, that it is difficult for me to converse by epistles with those at a distance, when I find myself here precluded from hav-

* Book 7, chap. 5.

ing any intercourse with my own bowels. I am constrained to *write* to them, though citizens of the same church, and how my writings may be conveyed to them seems difficult. A man may more easily travel from east to west than from Alexandria to Alexandria. The middle road of this city is more impassable than that vast wilderness which the Israelites wandered through in two generations.' He goes on to describe the miseries of war and bloodshed, of plagues and diseases, with which Alexandria at that time abounded, and complains that the people still repented not of their sins.

"Writing to the brethren, he says, 'Now every thing is full of lamentations, every one does nothing but mourn and howl through the city, because of the multitude of corpses and the daily deaths. Many of our brethren, because of their great love and brotherly charity, sparing not themselves, cleaved one to another, visited the sick without fear or caution, and attended upon them diligently; and in doing these things they lost their own lives, by catching the infection, and voluntarily transferred the sorrows of others upon themselves. In this manner the best of our brethren departed this life, of whom some were presbyters, some deacons, highly revered by the common people.' He then goes on to observe with what care and affection the Christians attended the funerals of their friends, while the Pagans in the same city, through fear of catching the infection, deserted and neglected theirs."

"In the year 264, the heresy of Paul of Samosata began to be famous, and a degeneracy both in principle and practice, hitherto very uncommon within the pale of Christianity, attracted the notice of all who wished well to the souls of men. Paul was the bishop of An-

tioch: it gives one no very high idea of the state of ecclesiastical discipline in that renowned church, that such a man should ever have been placed at its head at all. But it is no new thing for even sincere Christians to be dazzled with the parts and eloquence of corrupt men. The ideas of this man seem to have been perfectly secular, and Zenobia of Palmyra, who at that time styled herself queen of the east, and reigned over a large part of the empire, which had been torn from the indolent hands of Gallienus, desired his instructions in Christianity.* It does not appear that her motives had any thing in them beyond philosophical curiosity. The master and the scholar were well suited to each other, and Paul taught her his own conceptions of Jesus Christ, that he was by nature a common man as we are. The disorders of his life and the heterodoxy of his doctrine could no longer be endured. There is in fact more necessary connexion between these two than the world is ready to believe; because holiness can only be the effect of Christian truth. The bishops met at Antioch to consider his case; among these particularly Firmilian of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Athenodorus, who were brethren and bishops in Pontus, and Theotecnes of Cæsarea in Palestine. A number of ministers and deacons besides met together on the occasion. In several sessions the case of Paul was argued. Firmilian seems to have presided, and Paul was induced to recant, and gave such appearances of sincerity that Firmilian and the council believed him. The matter slept therefore for the present, and Paul continued in his bishopric."

A second council was convened concerning him under

* Athan. Tom. xi. p. 857. Fleury, Euseb. vii. c. 6, &c.

the emperor Aurelian. "His dissimulation was apparent, and the same intolerable corruption appearing both in his doctrine and in his morals, it behoved the friends of Christ to show that all regard for his person and precepts was not lost in the Christian world.* Seventy bishops appeared at the synod, among whom Theotecnus of Cæsarea in Palestine was still one of the principal. They waited some time for the arrival of Firmilian of Cappadocia, who had been invited, and was on his way notwithstanding his great age; but he died at Tarsus in the year 269. He had been one of the greatest luminaries of the day, and so had Gregory Thaumaturgus of Pontus, who died in the interval between the first and second council."

Paul was made "to declare himself and show what he really was. There needed no more to condemn him. All the bishops agreed to his deposition and exclusion from the Christian church.

"No fact in church history is more certain than this, and the demonstration is clear from thence, that Socinianism in the year 269 was not suffered to exist within the pale of the Christian church. I use that term, because it is now well understood, and it fairly expresses the ideas of Paul. In truth, no injury was done to the man: he had certainly no more right to Christian preferment than a traitor has to hold any office in any government; and to oblige him to speak out what he really held, was no more than what justice required. Truth and openness are essential to the character of all teachers; he who is void of them deserves to be without scholars or hearers. At the same time I cannot help seeing, that the doctrine usually called Trinitarian was universal in

* Athan de Syn. Euseb. 28, &c.

the church in these times. Dionysius, Firmilian, Gregory, Theotecnus, seventy bishops, the whole Christian world were unanimous in it, and this unanimity may fairly be traced upward to the apostles."

"‘We believe,’ writes Felix, the successor of Dionysius of Rome, ‘we believe that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; we believe that he himself is the eternal God and the Word, and not a man whom God hath taken into himself, so as that man should be distinct from him; for the Son of God being perfect God, was also made perfect man, being incarnate of the virgin.’”*

The doctrine of justification by faith appears to have been held with equal firmness. The following language of Origen concerning it, expresses the sense of the age. —Commenting on that passage in Rom. iii. “we conclude that a man is justified by faith,” &c. he says, “‘*the justification of faith only is sufficient, so that if any only believe, he may be justified, though no good work hath been fulfilled by him;*’ and again, on the case of the penitent thief, ‘he was justified by faith without the works of the law; because concerning this the Lord did not inquire what he had before done, neither did he stay to ask what work he would perform after he had believed, but being justified by his confession only, he going to paradise, carried him as a companion along with him.’”

In 277 appeared the heresy of Manes, who attempted to account for the origin of evil, by supposing two first causes independent of each other.

The church has been ever like the Israelites in the wilderness, disposed to err.—An interval of peace gave

* Conc. Eph. See Fleury, b. 8. c. 4.

Satan an advantage. Its graces languished. The spirit of prayer grew less importunate.

In doctrine it remained sound, for the heretic here and there appearing was discountenanced at once. In government it knew no change. During the whole of the three first centuries—the most interesting and important—there were few schismatics. Even those who departed from sound doctrine endeavoured to carry a bishop with them. But the value of chastisement was apparent. Eusebius, describing its approach at the close of the century, says, “the heavy hand of God’s judgments, began softly, by little and little, to visit us after his wonted manner, so that the persecution which was raised against us took its first rise from the Christians who were in military service. But we were not at all moved with his hand, nor took any pains to return to God, but heaped sin upon sin, thinking, like careless epicureans, that God cared not for, nor would ever visit us for our sins. And our pretended shepherds, laying aside the rule of godliness, practised among themselves contention and division.”

During the third century the gospel was considerably extended in France, and churches founded at Tours, Arles, Narbonne, and Paris. Germany shared in the same blessing. The Goths in Thrace too were visited.

CHAPTER X.

Order of the Church.

EUSEBIUS gives us the names of the bishops of several of the sees in regular order. A recital of all their names is not necessary here. Many have been given.

“The first teachers, the apostles, who planted the first churches, ordained successors, as far as appears, without any consultation of the people. It was not to be expected that any set of persons after them should be regarded as their equals, nor was it reasonable that it should be so. Undoubtedly the choice of bishops devolved on the people.* Their appearance to vote on these occasions, their sometimes forcing of persons to accept the office against their will, and the determination of Pope Leo, long after, against forcing a bishop on a people against their consent, demonstrate this. The persons to be elected to this office were very strictly examined. Public notice was given, that any one might inform against them, if they were vicious and immoral. The judgment of *life* was left to the people, that of *doctrine* belonged more to the other bishops, who ordained them. For the power of ordination belonged properly to bishops alone, though presbyters, a second order of men, who seem to me distinct all along from them, concurred with them and with the people. The same power of electing, in some degree and in some instances, the people had with respect to these presbyters; but the case is by no means so uniformly clear, and in the lower offices of the church the bishop acted still more according to his discretion.

“The use of deacons, the third order in the church, is well known. These three obtained very early in the primitive churches. The epistles of Ignatius (I build only on those parts that are undoubtedly genuine) demonstrate this, and in general the distinction of these offices was admitted through the Christian world.

“Yet if a Christian people were grown very heretical, the bishops thought themselves bound in duty to pro-

* Bingham, b. 4, c. 11. Antiquities. Du Pin, end of the third century.

vide for the instruction of the smaller number, who, in their judgment, loved the truth as it is in Jesus, by both electing and ordaining a bishop for them. Likewise in sending missionaries to the barbarous nations, it would be absurd to suppose that they waited for the choice of the people. They deputed and ordained whom they approved of for that end.

“There were a number of lower offices, door keepers, sub-deacons, acolyths, or attendants, readers, who by degrees grew up in the Christian church. These appear in the third century.”

“The authority of the bishop was by no means unlimited, but it was very great. Nothing could be done in the church without him. The extent of his diocese was called *παροικία*. Some of these dioceses had a greater, others a less number of churches which belonged to them. The diocese of Rome had above forty churches, before the end of the third century, as Optatus observes; and this agrees very well with the account before stated,* that under Cornelius, the bishop, there were forty-six priests. Cornelius himself must have ministered particularly at the chief or mother church. Unpreaching prelates were then unknown. The priests of course must have supplied, among them, the service of the other churches. But in these times distinct parishes, with presbyters allotted to them, were not known in cities.† It appears that the bishop sent them successively to minister according to his discretion. But the neighbouring villages, which were annexed to bishoprics, could not be thus supplied. They had even then stated parish priests, who acted under the authority of the bishop.

“That bishops were not mere congregational pastors,

* See page 351. Milner's Ch. Hist.

† Bing. b. 9, c. 8.

seems evident from the nature of things, as well as the concurrent testimony of all antiquity. There were seven bishops who belonged to the seven churches of Asia, called angels in the book of Revelations. It is absurd to suppose that the great church of Ephesus, in the decline of St. John's life, should be only a single congregation; and most probably the same is true of all the rest. Supposing the Christian brethren to consist of five hundred men, they, their families and servants, and occasional hearers, would make an assembly large enough for any human voice. But the Christians of Ephesus consisted of many thousands, more probably. So did the church of Jerusalem.* The church of Antioch, in Chrysostom's time, consisted of an hundred thousand. I should not wonder if it had half that number in the latter end of the third century. Yet it is certain that dioceses were much smaller than in after times. 'The vast extension of them proved very inconvenient to the cause of godliness.'

Discipline was very strict: sometimes severe. Christian assemblies were held with great constancy, and the eucharist generally administered as often as there was public worship. Liberality to the indigent abounded.

The meekness of the Christians in consenting to suffer, was remarkable. They were numerous:—an empire within an empire: and they might have convulsed the state; but they were the servants of Him who said, Vengeance is mine.

Many infidel adversaries arose, and, among the rest, Porphyry; but their assaults only served to exhibit their own weakness. They, in the fragments of their writings which now exist, give us testimony concerning the cha-

* Acts xi. 21.

racter of believers, corroborating what we know from other sources. Thus has Jesus ever made the wrath of man to praise him.

Fourth Century.

CHAPTER I.

Diocletian Persecution.

THIS new era opened with persecution. Diocletian, the emperor, allowed himself to be persuaded by Galerius, who, with Constantine, bore the title of Cæsar, to issue a decree by which Christians were deprived of all honour, debarred the benefit of the laws, and exposed to torture. Through the arts of his counsellor, the rage of Diocletian rose to the greatest height. His brother in authority, Maximian, was made to unite with him, and even the mild Constantius was constrained to demolish the churches, though he spared the persons of the Christians.

Such was the fury of the enemies of the Lord, that fires were made in which numbers were burnt together; and, to prevent the possibility of believers obtaining justice, altars were placed in courts, at which plaintiffs were obliged to sacrifice before their cause could be heard.

How awful the state of things in which private revenge was identified with public spirit, and the man who from mere hatred informed against his neighbour was rewarded with the plaudits of the priesthood? What gratitude should fill every heart that lives in the days of religious liberty!

“The martyrdom of Peter, one of the emperor’s household, is very remarkable. He was brought before the emperor in Nicomedia, and was scourged with excessive severity. As he refused to sacrifice, though his bones were made bare by the stripes, a mixture of vinegar and salt was poured on his limbs; and this being still to no purpose, he was gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorginius, and many others, who served in the palace, after a variety of sufferings, were strangled. Anthinus, the bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded, and with him a great multitude of martyrs suffered. Men and women leaped on the funeral piles with alacrity; with the persecution, the spirit of martyrdom was revived in the church. In every place the prisons were filled with bishops and other Christian ministers, and no room was reserved for felons. Martyrs were put to death in every province. Africa and Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt throughout, abounded with them. Five persons of this last country, Eusebius speaks of, whom he had known in Palestine and Phœnicia. He himself saw them suffering under the scourge, or exposed to enraged wild beasts, and celebrates their admirable patience. One of them, scarcely twenty years of age, stood without bonds, with his hands stretched out in a praying posture, exposed to bears and leopards, which were backward to perform the bloody task assigned them. A bull which had been stimulated by hot iron applied to him, tossed with his horns, and tore his employers; and it was with some difficulty that beasts were found to execute the purposes of the persecution.

“Egypt suffered extremely. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, others by decollation, after horrible tortures. Some

perished by famine, others by crucifixion, and of these, some in the common manner; others were fastened with their heads downward, and preserved alive, that they might die by hunger. But the torments in Thebais exceed all description. Women, tied by one foot, were raised up on high, and exposed naked, monuments at once of the inhumanity and indecency of the persecution. Others were torn by the distorted boughs of trees; and these scenes continued some years. Sometimes ten, at other times, thirty, and sixty, and once a hundred men and women, with their little ones, in one day, were murdered by various torments.

“ Our author himself, while in Egypt, saw many executed* in one day, some beheaded, others burnt; so that both the executioners were quite fatigued, and their weapons were blunted. The Christians suffered (he speaks what he saw himself) with the greatest faith and patience. There was even the strongest appearance of joy and triumph among them, and to their last breath they employed themselves in psalms and thanksgiving. Philoromus, a person of great dignity at Alexandria, and a man of wealth and eloquence, is recorded as one, who died cheerfully for Christ at this time. Phileas also, bishop of the Thmuitæ, a man of eminence in his country, suffered in Thebais. In vain did relations, friends, magistrates, even the judge himself, exhort them to pity themselves, their wives and children. They loved Christ above all, and were beheaded.”†

* Euseb. b. 9. c. 8.

† Phileas being asked, how he was persuaded that Jesus Christ was God? replied, He made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. Being asked, Is a crucified person God? he answered, He was crucified for our salvation. The governor said, You are rich, and able to maintain almost all the province, I spare you, and advise you to sacrifice.

The power of divine grace was in these scenes abundantly manifest.

“ ‘The martyrs,’ says one of that day, himself a martyr, ‘fixing sincerely the eye of their mind on the Supreme God, and cheerfully embracing death for the sake of godliness, held immovably their calling, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ was made man for us, that he might cut down all sin, and might afford us the necessary preparatives for an entrance into eternal life.’ (He then quotes the well known passage concerning the proper deity and humiliation of Christ, in the second chapter to the Philippians.) Coveting the best gifts, the martyrs, who carried Christ within, underwent all sorts of tortures once and again. And while the guards insulted them in word and deed, they were preserved serene and unbroken in spirit, because ‘perfect love casteth out fear.’ But what eloquence can do justice to their fortitude? Free leave was given to any to injure them; some beat them with clubs, others with rods; some scourged them with thongs of leather, others with ropes. Some, having their hands behind them, were hung about a wooden engine, and every limb of their bodies was distended by certain machines. The torturers rent their whole bodies with iron nails, which were applied, not only to the sides, as in the case of murderers, but also to their bellies, their legs, and their cheeks; others were suspended by one hand to a portico, and underwent the most severe distension of all their joints; others were bound to pillars, face

It seems the liberality of Phileas was great toward the poor. The governor added, Thy poor wife looks on thee. Phileas answered, Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all our spirits, he hath called me to the inheritance of his glory, and he may also call her to it. A little before his execution, My dear children, said he, ye that seek God, watch over your hearts. My dear children, stick fast to the precepts of Jesus Christ,—Acta sincera. Fleury.

to face, their feet being raised above ground, that their bonds, being distended by the weight of their bodies, might be the closer drawn together, and this they endured almost a whole day without intermission.—The governor ordered them to be bound with the greatest severity, and when they breathed their last, to be dragged on the ground. No care, said he, ought to be taken of these Christians; let all treat them as unworthy the name of men. Some, after they had been scourged, lay in the stocks, both their feet being stretched to the fourth hole; so that they were obliged to lie with their faces upward, unable to stand on account of the wounds caused by the stripes. Some expired under their tortures. Others having been recovered by methods taken to heal them, and being reduced to the alternative of sacrificing or dying, cheerfully preferred the latter. For they knew what was written, ‘Whosoever sacrificeth to other gods, shall be destroyed,’ and ‘Thou shalt have no other gods but me.’”

“In Pontus, sharp reeds were thrust under the nails into the fingers of some; the backs of others were scorched by melted lead; some in their bowels and privy parts suffered inexpressible torments; the judges exercising ingenious malice in the daily invention of new punishments.

“Wearied at length with murder, and affecting to praise the clemency of the emperors, who were desirous to save life, they contented themselves with plucking out eyes, and cutting off one of the legs. The number of those who suffered in this way was inexpressible; and they were afterwards condemned to work in the mines.

“Lucian, a holy and exemplary presbyter of Antioch, had the honour to apologize for Christianity at Nico-

media, in the presence of the emperor, and afterwards to suffer. Tyrannio, bishop of Tyre, was thrown into the sea. Zenobius, a presbyter of Sidon, and an excellent physician, expired serene in tortures. Sylvanus, bishop of Emesa, with some others, was exposed to the wild beasts. Peleus and Nilus, Egyptian bishops, with others, were burnt to death. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, suffered also, together with Faustus, Dius, and Ammonius, his presbyters."

"Romanus, a deacon of the church of Cæsarea, was martyred. Happening to enter Antioch at the very time when the churches were demolished, he saw many men and women with their little ones, crowding to the temples and sacrifices, most probably Christian apostates.* The same spirit which moved Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, on a like occasion, was felt by Romanus, but exerted in a manner more agreeable to the Christian dispensation. He cried aloud, and rebuked their cowardice and perfidy. But being seized immediately, and condemned to the flames, and fastened to the stake, while the executioners expected the definitive order from the emperor then present, (Galerius most probably) he asked cheerfully, Where is the fire for me? Cæsar, provoked at his boldness, ordered his tongue to be cut out. He put out his tongue with great readiness. After this punishment he was thrown into prison, and suffered there a considerable time. His feet were exposed to an unnatural distension, and in the end he was dismissed out of life by strangling."

The persecution grew still hotter. Power was given

* So a discourse of Eusebius on the Resurrection teaches us. See B. on the Martyrs of Palestine, C. II. Valesius in the notes.

to the governors of the different provinces to punish the Christians freely, and they exercised it with every variety of ingenious torture. Even learning and eloquence were put in requisition to insult the Christians. In France, under Constantius, believers found some shelter, but fear of the emperor Maximian obliged even this Cæsar, in some degree, to persecute.

“Felix of Tibiura, in Africa, being asked to deliver up the scriptures, answered, I have them, but will not part with them. He was condemned to be beheaded. ‘I thank thee, O Lord,’ says this honest martyr, ‘that I have lived fifty-six years, have kept my virginity, have preserved the Gospel, and have preached faith and truth. O my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, I bow my head to be sacrificed to thee, who livest to all eternity.’”

Dioclesian and Maximian resigning the empire, Galerius and Constantius took their place. The former still continued to rage, and the east suffered, the prey of savage ferocity. Maximin, the nephew of Galerius, being his Cæsar, heartily united in destroying believers.

Among the sufferers, there were doubtless some who did not know their own spirit, and there were others who manifested too great a desire for martyrdom. Men in every age find it difficult to imitate the meekness of the Lord Jesus. But in the great body of the martyrs the pure principles of the gospel were manifest.

“Toward the end of the seventh year the persecution relaxing in some degree, the multitude of the confessors in the mines of Palestine enjoyed some liberty, and even erected some places for public worship. The president of the province coming among them, envied them the

small cessation of their miseries, and wrote to the emperor in their prejudice. Afterwards the master of the mines coming thither, as if by an imperial rescript, divided the sufferers into classes. Some he ordered to dwell in Cyprus, others in Libanus; the rest he dispersed and harassed with various drudgeries in different parts of Palestine. Four he singled out for the examination of the military commander, who burnt them to death. Silvanus, a bishop of great piety, John, an Egyptian, and thirty-seven others, were the same day beheaded by the order of Maximin. Of John, it is remarked, that though blind, he had been, like the rest, cauterized and debilitated in one leg by a hot iron. The strength of his memory was admired among the Christians; he could at pleasure repeat from the Old or New Testament many passages in Christian assemblies. But the fact proves something more than what Eusebius mentions, namely, that he had made the best use of his eyes, while he was possessed of them."

In the west the Christians still enjoyed rest. Constantius being elevated to supreme authority, was enabled to act out his wish concerning them.

We may be surprised, that for eight years Satan should have been permitted to rage so fiercely against the people of God. But we have already adverted to the cause. It was to purify the church: to rouse it to greater watchfulness, zeal, and prayer. Christ had in view the full establishment of his gospel in the Roman world, and he allowed the adversary to exert himself for a time that his own power might be the more fully displayed. In permitting his followers to die by persecution, he only gave them a more speedy release to Paradise. He preserved a seed upon earth, too, and brought them forth from the

furnace of trial to serve him with more abundant holiness. The wrath of man he made to praise him, and the remainder of wrath in good time restrained. Christ doeth all things well.

CHAPTER II.

Constantine.

THE emperor Constantius dying in Britain, Constantine, his son, succeeded him. He gave immediately perfect toleration to the Christians, and was evidently raised up by that Almighty arm which is always stretched forth to succour the redeemed. From early life he had an attachment to Christianity. His father having many Christians in his palace, and, among them, ministers who openly prayed for him, he grew up surrounded by holy influence. We are told of him, by an ancient writer who had the narration from himself, and had it confirmed by an oath, that when, shortly after coming to the crown, he marched into Italy against Maxentius, he prayed to the God of the Christians, and the trophy of the cross appeared very luminous in the heavens, higher than the sun, with this inscription, "Conquer by this." This appearance was in the afternoon, and was visible to his soldiers. He assumed thenceforward the cross as his symbol, and declared his belief in Christianity. He was successful against Maxentius, and became master of Rome.

"Galerius in the year 310 was smitten with an incurable disease: all his lower parts were corrupted: physicians and idols were applied to in vain: an intolerable

stench spread itself over the palace of Sardis, where he resided: he was devoured by worms: and in a situation the most dreadful he continued a whole year. Softened at length by his sufferings, he published, in the year 311, an edict by which he took off the persecution from the Christians, allowed them to rebuild their places of worship, and entreated them to pray for his health. Thus did God himself subdue this haughty tyrant. Prisons were opened, and among others Donatus, the friend of Lactantius,* who had been confined six years, recovered his liberty.

“Galerius had exceeded all emperors in hostility to Christ; but who can fix the limit of human passions? His nephew Maximin, who reigned in a subordinate capacity in the east, was even his superior in the arts of persecution. Paganism was expiring, and it behoved the prince of darkness to find or qualify an agent, who should dispute every inch of ground with persevering assiduity.

“Maximin, equally unmoved by the example of Constantine on the one hand, and the extorted clemency of Galerius on the other, suppressed the edict of the latter, and contented himself with giving verbal orders to stop the persecution. The prætorian prefect, Sabinus, however, declared the will of the emperor in favour of toleration, which had all the effect his humanity wished. The prisoners were released, the confessors were freed from the mines, the highways were full of Christians, singing psalms and hymns to God, as they returned to their friends, and Christendom at length wore a cheerful aspect. Even Pagans were melted; and many who had joined in the attempt to extinguish the Christian name,

* De Mort. persecut.

began to be convinced, that a religion, which had sustained such repeated and such formidable attacks, was divine and invincible.

“But this calm lasted not six whole months.* Galerius, a few days after his edict, expired, his body being altogether corrupted.”

“Maximin attempted to succeed him in all his eastern dominions; but was prevented by Licinius, whom Galerius had nominated Augustus, and who took possession of Asia Minor. But Syria and Egypt, with their dependencies, remained still under Maximin. Here he renewed the persecution with much malevolence and artifice.” Among other acts of malevolence, he circulated blasphemous accounts of our Saviour, and directed schoolmasters to deliver them to the young to commit to memory.

“A few bishops and persons of Christian renown were deprived of life; the rest were harassed by every other kind of suffering short of death; and no arts were left unemployed to root Christianity out of the mind, and educate the next generation in a confirmed aversion to it. The decrees of cities against Christians, and besides these, the copies of imperial edicts engraved in brazen tables, were nailed up and seen in every town. Nothing like this had been done before. The persecution, in this its last stage, had arrived at the perfection of diabolical ingenuity. Children in their schools daily sounded Jesus and Pilate, and other things, invented to asperse the Gospel.”

Unexpected famine, however, oppressed the dominions of Maximin. Pestilence of the direst kind followed. The Armenians made war against him. So that the power of that God against whom he was contending, was

* Euseb. b. 11, c. ii. &c.

manifest. "The plague and famine raged in the most dreadful manner, and multitudes lay unburied. The Christians, whose piety and fear of God were stirred up on this occasion, were the only persons who employed themselves in doing good, every day busying themselves in taking care of the sick, and burying the dead, whereas numbers of Pagans were neglected by their own friends; they gathered together also multitudes of the famished poor, and distributed bread to all; thus imitating their heavenly Father, who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Christians still appeared to be superior to all others; and the church was known yet to exist, by fruits peculiarly her own, to the praise of her God and Saviour."

In 312, Dioclesian died miserably.

In 313, Licinius contended with Maximin for the sovereignty of the east. "Before the decisive battle, Maximin vowed to Jupiter, that if he obtained the victory he would abolish the Christian name. Licinius, in a dream,* was directed to supplicate, with all his army, the supreme God, in a solemn manner. He gave directions to his soldiers to do so, and they prayed in the field of battle, using the very words which he had received in his dream. In all this the reader will see nothing suspicious, nothing but what is in its own nature very credible, when he considers that the contest between Jehovah and Jupiter was now at its height, and drawing to a crisis. Victory decided in favour of Licinius. Maximin, in consequence of this,† published a cautious decree, in which he forbade the molestation of Christians, but did not allow them the liberty of public worship. Warned by former experience of his enmity, the Christians in

* Lact. de M. P.

† Euseb. b. 10, c. ix.

his dominions dared not to assemble themselves together. Whilst the rest of the Christian world, under the auspices of Constantine and Licinius, who published a complete toleration of Christianity, together with that of all other religions, enjoyed peace and tranquillity.

“It was the will of God to lay his hand still more heavily on the tyrant. Struck with rage at his disappointments, in the sad reverse of his affairs he slew many priests and prophets of his gods, by whose enchantments he had been seduced with false hopes of universal empire in the east; and finding most probably that he gained no friends among Christians by his late edict, he published another in their favour as full and complete as that of Constantine and Licinius. So amazingly were affairs now changed, that contending emperors courted the favour of the poor persecuted Christians. After this he was struck with a sudden plague over his whole body, pined away with hunger, fell down from his bed, his flesh being so wasted away by a secret fire, that it consumed and dropped off from his bones; his eyes started out of their sockets; and in his distress he began to see God passing judgment on him. Frantic in his agonies, he cried out, ‘It was not I, but others who did it.’ At length, by the increasing force of torment, he owned his guilt, and every now and then implored Christ, that he would compassionate his misery. He confessed himself vanquished, and gave up the ghost.”* †

Licinius proved a persecutor. “He prohibited Chris-

* It is remarkable, that all the associates of Maximin in his crimes, partook also of his punishments. Among these, Culsian, the bloody governor of Thebais, and Theotecnus, are distinguished. His enchanters were, by torments under the authority of Licinius, compelled to lay open the frauds of their employers, and he and they, with all the children and relations of the tyrant, were destroyed.

† Lactantius de Mort. Persic. 49

tian synods in his dominions, expelled believers from his court, and forbade the women to attend the public assemblies of men, and ordered them to furnish themselves with separate teachers of their own sex. He dismissed from his armies those who refused to sacrifice, and forbade any supplies to be afforded them in their necessities. He proceeded still further. He murdered bishops, and destroyed churches. At Amasia, in Pontus, his cruelty was particularly distinguished. He used enchantments, and once more Satan made a feeble attempt to recover by his means the ground he had lost. It was not probable, that Licinius should take these steps without quarrelling with Constantine, and a war soon commenced between the two princes. Licinius put the truth or falsehood of the gospel on the event of war. It was an unwarranted appeal, but God answered him in his own way. He lost in the issue both his empire and his life."

Constantine was thus made master of the whole Roman empire, and he began to employ all his power in aggrandizing the church.

May we not pause a moment and compare the state of the church with what it was when the Redeemer ascended. We have already beheld its spread at the close of the first century. From a grain of mustard seed, we have seen it beginning to fill the earth. Now we behold it established wide as the dominion of the Cæsars.

One reason why universal empire was permitted to one nation is manifest. It was, that,—the energies of the world having first exhausted themselves in vain against the cross,—the cross might, with greater facility, extend its sway. The power of the Redeemer is in nothing more manifest. He permitted Rome to gather to itself strength, and to rage against his people, then he

made that very Rome, with all its mightiness, crouch, like a spaniel, at his feet.

CHAPTER III.

Arianism.

It is a lamentable proof of the wickedness of man, that we no sooner see the church freed from the violence of persecution, than we behold heresy beginning to spread. That precious gold of truth which was found to be the only support in the time of trial, was allowed to be adulterated when trial passed away. It is the plan of Satan to change his mode of attack, and we see those changes frequently in observing the history of believers.

Constantine pressed forward the building of churches, and adorned them with a great deal of pomp. The governors of the provinces were directed to promote the gospel. Helena, the emperor's mother, not only abounded in acts of munificence, but travelled from place to place to advance the cause. As might be expected, under such circumstances, all ranks of men vied with each other in favouring the Christians. Another natural consequence was, professors of religion multiplied; and thus those who at heart loved not the truth began to abound in the church.

A set of schismatics who arose in Africa gave the emperor some trouble. A faction having appeared in Carthage, on the election of a bishop, and a number of bishops—chiefly those found wanting in time of persecution—uniting with it, Donatus of Casæ Nigræ, became its leader.

But the great cause of evil was Arius. He was a

man, who, in the beginning of his course, was a schismatic, but, becoming reconciled to the church, was ordained a deacon. Afterward, exhibiting a restless and factious spirit, he was expelled. By nature formed to deceive, grave, captivating, and learned, he again succeeded in gaining admission into the fold, and was advanced to the office of presbyter. In the church of Alexandria, to which he belonged, this office was "more important than in others, because each presbyter had a distinct congregation of his own, and was not sent up and down to different churches, at the discretion of the bishop, as the general practice had been in the primitive church. This practice, however, in time gave way to the Alexandrian custom. Alexander, the successor of Achillas, under Constantine, treated Arius with respect, and appeared very backward to censure him for his dangerous speculations in religion. The pride of reasoning seduced the presbyter to assert,* that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he was capable of virtue or of vice, and that he was a creature, and mutable as creatures are. Whilst he was insinuating these things, the easiness of Alexander in tolerating such notions was found fault with in the church. Necessity roused him at length, however unwilling, to contend, and in disputing before Arius and the rest of his clergy,† he affirmed that there was an union in the Trinity. Arius, thinking that the bishop introduced Sabellianism, eagerly maintained the extreme which is opposite to that heresy, and said, 'If the Father begat the Son, the begotten had a beginning of existence; hence it was evident that there was a time when he was not.'"

"Arius evidently split on the common rock of all

* Sozomen, b. i. c. 15.

† Socrates, 1. 5.

heresies, a desire of explaining by our reason the modes of things which we are required to believe on divine testimony alone. Many of the clergy joined the disputatious presbyter, and it was no longer in Alexander's power to prevent a solemn cognizance of the cause. He was himself cautious and slow in his proceedings;* while many persons of a grave cast, and able and eloquent, like Arius, espoused and fostered the infant heresy. Arius preached diligently at his church, diffused his opinions in all companies, and gained over many of the common people; a number of women who had professed virginity espoused his cause; and Alexander saw the ancient doctrine of the church undermined continually.† Lenient measures and argumentative methods having been tried in vain, he summoned a synod of bishops, who met at Alexandria, condemned Arius's doctrine, and expelled him from the church, with nine of his adherents."

Arius said, "That the Son proceeded out of a state of non-existence; that he was not before he was made; that he, who is without beginning, has set his Son as the beginning of things that are made, and that God made one, whom he called Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us." Thus contradicting the whole tenor of scripture.

"It is an easy thing to say here, that silence and charity would have been the best means of preserving peace on all sides: but then this mode of speaking supposes that the controversy was frivolous. No real Christian can think it unimportant, whether his Saviour be believed to be the Creator or a creature. The soul is of too great consequence for men to hazard its salvation on they

* Sozomen, l. 5.

† Theod. b. i. c. 2. See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

know not what. And it then appeared to all humble and charitable Christians, that to persist in blaspheming God, was at least as practical an evil as to persist in drunkenness and theft. All these found themselves obliged to join with Alexander against Arius. Silence was a vice in this case; though it can never be enough lamented how little care was taken of humility and charity, of both which the exercise is perfectly consistent with the sincere zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity; but true religion itself was low; the face of the church was ‘sullied and dishonoured, yet still divine.’ And amidst the numbers who, from fashion, prejudice, or worse motives, joined with the Alexandrian bishop, we must look for those, though they are hard to be found, who feared God, and whose history alone is the subject before us. The principles of Arius exclude him and his followers, and by the fullest light of antiquity their actions exclude them also.”

The contest was an unhappy one, for even the Christians allowed themselves to forget too much the meekness of their master. Arius exerted his talents and obtained friends. Several bishops joined him, one of whom was in the court of the emperor “Near an hundred bishops in a second synod at Alexandria condemned Arius, who was now obliged to quit that place, and try to gain supporters in other parts of the empire.”

Constantine determined to “summon the aid of the whole Christian church; and the Nicene Council calls for our attention.

“The bishops collected from all parts of the Christian world, met at Nice in Bithynia: and their number, according to the account of Athanasius, who was present, amounted to three hundred and eighteen. Of these, if

we may believe Philostorgius, the Arian historian, twenty-two espoused the cause of Arius; others make the minority still less. Be that as it may, since many presbyters were there besides the bishops, it is not probable, that the whole number of persons assembled in the council was less than six hundred.

“ They met in the year 325, being transported to Nice in public conveyances at the emperor’s expense, and maintained at his cost, while they resided there.

“ Before the immediate business of the synod was entered upon, their attention was engaged by the attempts of some Gentile philosophers who appeared among them; some with a design to satisfy their curiosity concerning Christianity itself, others wishing to involve the Christians in a cloud of verbal subtilties, and to enjoy the mutual contradictions of the followers of Christ. One of them distinguished himself above the rest by the pomp and arrogance of his pretensions, and derided the clergy as ignorant and illiterate. On this occasion an old Christian, who had suffered with magnanimous constancy during the late persecutions, though unacquainted with logical forms, undertook to contend with the philosopher. Those who were more earnest to gratify curiosity than to investigate truth, endeavoured to raise a laugh at the old man’s expense; while serious spirits were distressed to see a contest apparently so unequal. Respect for the man, however, induced them to permit him to engage; and he immediately addressed the philosopher in these terms: ‘ Hear, Philosopher, says he, in the name of Jesus Christ. There is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, who made all these things by the power of his Word, and confirmed them by the holiness of his Spirit. This Word, whom

we call the Son of God, compassionating the sons of men involved in error and wickedness, chose to be born of a woman, to converse with men, and to die for them; and he will come again as the Judge of all things which men have done in the body. That these things are so, we believe in simplicity: do not then labour in vain, investigating the manner in which these things may or may not be, and seeking to confute things which ought to be received by faith: but if thou believest, answer, me, now that I ask thee.' Struck with this plain authoritative address, the philosopher said, 'I do believe;' with pleasure owned himself vanquished, confessed that he embraced the same sentiments with the old man, and advised the other philosophers to do the same, swearing that he was changed by a divine influence, and moved by an energy which he could not explain."*

Constantine acted as moderator of the synod, and endeavoured to bring all to a perfect agreement. But the fundamental truth of the gospel was too important to be given up, and the Arians were obstinate.

"It soon appeared, that without some explanatory terms, decisively pointing out what the scriptures had revealed, it was impossible to guard against the subtilties of the Arians. Did the Trinitarians assert that Christ was God, the Arians allowed it; but in the same sense as holy men and angels are styled gods in Scripture? Did they affirm that he was truly God? the others allowed that he was made so by God. Did they affirm that the Son was naturally of God? it was granted; for even we, said they, are of God, of whom are all things. Was it affirmed, that the Son was the power, wisdom, and image of the Father? we admit it, replied the others, for

* Sozomen, b. i. c. 18.

we also are said to be the image and glory of God. Such is the account* which Athanasius gives of the disputations. He was at that time deacon of the church of Alexandria, and supported his bishop with so much accuracy and strength of argument, as to lay the foundation of that fame, which he afterwards acquired by his zeal in this controversy. What could the Trinitarians do in this situation? to leave the matter undecided, was to do nothing; to confine themselves merely to Scripture terms, was to suffer the Arians to explain the doctrine in their own way, and to reply nothing. Undoubtedly they had a right to comment according to their own judgment, as well as the Arians; and they did so in the following manner. They collected together the passages of Scripture, which represent the Divinity of the Son of God, and observed that taken together they amounted to a proof of his being of the *same substance with the Father* ομοουσιος. That creatures were indeed said to be of God, because, not existing of themselves, they had their beginning from him; but that the Son was peculiarly of the Father, being of his substance, as begotten of him."

Arianism was condemned as heresy. "The venerable Hosius of Corduba was appointed to draw up a creed, which is in the main the same that is called the Nicene Creed to this day. It soon received the sanction of the council, and of Constantine himself, who declared, that whoever refused to comply with the decree, should be banished."

"Arius was deposed, excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria. The minority at first refused to subscribe, but, being advised to yield at length by Constantia their patroness, the emperor's sister, they consent-

* See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

ed. . But by the insertion of a single letter they reserved to themselves their own sense, subscribing, not that the Son is the same, but only of a like essence with the Father.* Honesty is however always respectable. Out of twenty-two Arian bishops, two were found who persisted in refusing: Secundus of Ptolemais, and Theonas of Marmarica: the former of whom bluntly rebuked the courtly Eusebius of Nicomedia for his dissimulation. Arius and his associates were banished into Illyricum.”

The bishop of Alexandria dying, Athanasius succeeded him. All his firmness was immediately put in requisition, for the wiles of the subtle adversaries of the truth were successful in obtaining to them friends, and even in prejudicing the emperor. In 335, a council was summoned at Tyre, to try Athanasius. The heaviest crimes were charged against him; “but every thing appeared to be the result of malice. One case alone shall be mentioned, by which a judgment may be formed of all the rest. He was said to have murdered Arsenius, a Miletian bishop; for proof of which the accusers produced a box, out of which they took a dead man’s hand, dried and salted, which they affirmed to be the hand of Arsenius, and that it was preserved by Athanasius for magical purposes. The Meletians charged Arsenius to conceal himself till they had effected their purpose. The party of Eusebius of Nicomedia spread the report through the Christian world, that Arsenius had been privately murdered by the bishop of Alexandria, and Constantine himself, overcome by incessant importunities, was induced to order an inquiry to be made.†

* Not *ὁμοῦσιος*, but *ὁμοιῶσιος*. It is remarkable, that this duplicity of theirs is recorded by Philostorgius the Arian historian. See Cave’s *Life of Athanasius*.

† Socrates, b. i. c. 27.

“Athanasius had learned by his own experience, that any accusation against himself, however improbable, was likely to find numerous and powerful supports. But Providence wonderfully confuted this attempt. Arsenius, notwithstanding the directions of the accusers to keep close, had privately conveyed himself to Tyre, intending to be secreted there during the whole time of the synod. It happened, that some servants belonging to Archelaus, the governor, heard a rumour whispered, that Arsenius was in town. This they immediately told their master, who found him out, apprehended him, and gave notice to Athanasius. The Meletian too, unwilling to blast his employers, and feeling the awkwardness of his situation, at first denied himself to be Arsenius. Happily, Paul the bishop of Tyre, who knew the man, deprived him of that refuge. The day of trial being come, the prosecutors boasted that they should give ocular demonstration to the court, of the guilt of Athanasius, and produced the dead hand. A shout of victory rung through the synod. Silence being made, Athanasius asked the judges, if any of them knew Arsenius? Several affirming that they did, Athanasius directs the man to be brought into the court, and asks, Is this the man whom I murdered, and whose hand I cut off? Athanasius turns back the man's cloak, and shows one of his hands; after a little pause, he put back the other side of the cloak, and shows the other hand. ‘Gentlemen, you see,’ said he, ‘that Arsenius has both his hands; how the accusers came by the third hand, let them explain.’ Thus ended the plot to the shame of the contrivers.

“That any persons, who bear the name of Christ, should deliberately be guilty of such villainy, is deeply to be regretted. But let it be remembered, that the real faith of

Christ was opposed by those who were concerned in this base act, and that enmity to the doctrine of the Trinity produced it. The story itself deserves also to be preserved as a memorable instance of the interposition of Divine Providence.

“ Notwithstanding the clearest proofs of Athanasius’s innocence, and that the whole course of his life was extremely opposite to such crimes as he was charged with, his enemies prevailed so far, that commissioners were despatched into Egypt, to examine the matters of which he was accused. Yet John, the Meletian bishop, the chief contriver of the plot, confessed his fault to Athanasius, and begged his forgiveness. And Arsenius himself renounced his former connexions, and desired to be received into communion with the Alexandrian prelate.

“ Egypt, where Athanasius must have been best known, was faithful to her prelate. Forty-seven bishops of that country entered a protest against the injustice of the council, but in vain. The Arian commissioners arrived at Alexandria, and endeavoured to extort evidence against him by drawn swords, whips, clubs, and all engines of cruelty.* The Alexandrian clergy desired to be admitted to give evidence, but were refused. To the number of fifteen presbyters and four deacons they remonstrated, but to no purpose. The Maræotic clergy took the same steps, but to no purpose. The delegates returned with extorted evidence to Tyre, whence Athanasius, who saw no justice was to be had, had fled. They passed sentence, and deposed him from his bishopric.

“ Yet there were those in the synod of Tyre, who were willing to do justice to the much injured prelate. Paphnutius, who has been before mentioned, took Maxi-

* Epist. Synod, Alexan. Athan.

mus, bishop of Jerusalem, by the hand, 'Let us be gone,' said he, 'it becomes not those who have lost their limbs for religion, to go along with such pernicious company.' But the majority were very differently disposed.

"Athanasius came to Constantinople, and desired justice from the emperor, and a fair trial. Constantine ordered the bishops of the synod to appear before him, and to give an account of what they had done. The greatest part of them returned home; but the genius of Eusebius of Nicomedia was not exhausted, and as he stuck at no fraud, and was ashamed of no villainy, he, with a few of the synod, went to Constantinople, and waving the old accusations, he brought a fresh one, namely, that Athanasius had threatened to stop the fleet that brought corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. Constantine was credulous enough to be moved by the report: the Arian arts prevailed at court: those who used no arms but truth and honesty were foiled for the present; and Athanasius was banished to Treves, in Gaul.

"Arius, flushed with the success of his party, returned to Alexandria, and strengthened the hands of the heretics, who had long languished for want of his abilities. The city being torn with intestine divisions, the emperor ordered the heresiarch to come to Constantinople, and there to give an account of his conduct. That imperial city was now the chief seat of the contention. But Providence had given her a bishop not unequal to the contest. This was Alexander of Constantinople, a man of eminent piety and integrity, whose character at least seems to have approached as near to that of a primitive Christian as did that of any persons who distinguished themselves at this period. Eusebius of Nicomedia menaced him with deposition and exile, unless he consented

to receive Arius into the church. On the one hand, the prelate knew too well the power of the Arians by what they had done already; and the Trinitarians were so far outmatched by them in subtilty and artifice, that though victorious in argument in the face of the whole world, with the council of Nice, and an orthodox emperor on their side, they yet were persecuted and oppressed, and their enemies prevailed at court. But on the other hand, it behoved not a Christian bishop to consent to the admission of an artful sectarian who could agree in form to the Nicene faith, and yet gradually insinuate his poisonous doctrines into the church. What were this but in fact to allow the wolf to enter the sheep-fold, and devour the flock? The mind of Alexander was directed aright in this conjuncture. He spent several days and nights in prayer alone in his church; the faithful followed his example, and prayer was made by the church without ceasing, that God would interfere on this occasion. Controversies and the arts of logic were admitted; and they, who believed that the Nicene faith was holy, and of most interesting concern to the souls of men, sincerely committed their cause to God.

“ But Constantine himself was not to be prevailed on to admit Arius into the church, unless he could be convinced of his orthodoxy. He sent for him therefore to the palace, and asked him plainly, whether he agreed to the Nicene decrees. The heresiarch, without hesitation, subscribed: the emperor ordered him to swear: he assented to this also. I follow the narrative of Socrates, one of the most candid and moderate historians, who tells us that he had heard, that Arius had under his arm a written paper of his real sentiments, and that he swore that he believed as he had written. Whether he used

this equivocation or not, is far from being clear. But Socrates, who is careful to tell us that he heard this reported, assures us that he did swear in addition to his subscriptions, and that this he knew from the emperor's epistles.* Constantine, whose scruples were now overcome, ordered Alexander to receive him into the church the next day. The good bishop had given himself to fasting and prayer, and renewed his supplications that day with great fervour in the church, prostrate before the altar, and attended by Marcarius only, who was a presbyter belonging to Athanasius. He begged, that if Arius was in the right, he himself might not live to see the day of contest; but if the faith was true, which he professed, that Arius, the author of all the evils, might suffer the punishment of his impiety. The next day seemed to be a triumphant one to the Arians: the heads of the party paraded through the city with Arius in the midst, and drew the attention of all toward them. When they came nigh the forum of Constantine, a sudden terror, with a disorder of the bowels, seized Arius. He asked for a privy, where he might retire and ease himself, and being told there was one behind the forum, he hasted thither, and fainted; and his bowels were poured out with a vast effusion of blood, and thus he expired."

"Great was the joy of the aged bishop to find that God had not forsaken his church. What effect the event had on Constantine appears not. He died soon after, about the sixty-fifth year of his age, having first received baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia. This he had long delayed, and the custom, from the imperial example, would naturally gather fresh strength. Superstition had by this time taught men to connect by a necessary union

* B. i. c. 8.

the forgiveness of sins with the administration of the rite: and men who loved to continue in sin protracted their baptism to a time when they imagined it might be of the greatest advantage to them."

Constantine, his eldest son, who succeeded him in Spain and Gaul, sent Athanasius back to his bishopric with great respect, saying that his father had intended to do the same, but was prevented by death.

Constantius, to whom fell the dominions in the east, was a persecutor of the Christians. Alexander of Constantinople, dying, the people elected as bishop a man of primitive faith, but the emperor arriving soon after, "was provoked at the election, encouraged an Arian council, directed its resolves, and Eusebius of Nicomedia was translated to the Metropolitan See, which from this time continued under Arian government for forty years. Thus the ancient usages in choosing bishops were altered, and a precedent was set, of fixing in the hands of princes the government of the church in capital cities. A council of a hundred bishops of Egypt, with Athanasius at their head, protested against these proceedings to the whole Christian world.

"A council was now convened at Antioch, supported by the presence of the emperor and by the manœuvres of Eusebius. Here they undertook to depose Athanasius, and ordain Gregory, a Cappadocian, in his room; prevailing on Constantius to direct Philagrius, the prefect of Egypt, to support their proceedings with an armed force. For the integrity and probity of Athanasius had gained him so strong an ascendant in Egypt, that while the primitive modes of church government remained, it would have been impossible to expel him. Violence was found necessary to support iniquity, and an Arian

prince was obliged to tread in the steps of his pagan predecessors, to support what he called the church.

“ His views were promoted with vigour. Virgins and monks were cruelly treated at Alexandria: Jews and pagans were encouraged to murder Christians.* Gregory himself entered the church with the governor and certain pagans, and caused a number of the friends of Athanasius to be scourged and imprisoned. The persecuted prelate himself, who wanted not courage and capacity to resist, acted however a much more Christian part. He fled from the storm, and made his escape to Rome.

“ This also happened about the year 342. It was a memorable season for the church of God, which now found her livery to be that of persecution, even when pagans had ceased to reign. Gregory would not suffer the Athanasians, who in great numbers still refused to own the Arian domination, even to pray in their own houses. He visited Egypt in company with Philagrius. The greatest severities were inflicted on those bishops who had been zealous for the Nicene faith, though the decrees of the council had never been reversed, and the Arians as yet contented themselves with ambiguous confessions and the omission of the term consubstantial. Bishops were scourged and put in irons. Potamo, whom we have before celebrated, was beaten on the neck, till he was thought to have expired; he recovered in a small degree, but died some time after. His crime, in the eyes of the Arians, was doubtless an unvaried attachment to the Nicene faith.

“ While Gregory dealt in violence, his competitor used only the more Christian arms of argument. He published an epistle to the Christian world,† exhorting all the

* Apolog. Athan. 2. Fleury, b. ii. 14.

† Athan. vi. p. 943.

bishops to unite on the occasion. ‘The faith is now begun,’ says he, ‘it came to us by the Lord from his disciples. Lest what has been preserved in the churches until now perish in our days, and we be called to an account for our stewardship, exert yourselves, my brethren, as stewards of the mysteries of God, and as beholding your rights taken away by strangers.’ ”

Athanasius continued an exile at Rome eighteen months. A council of western bishops summoned there justified him.

Constans, the third son of Constantine, who reigned in Italy and Africa, clung to the truth as set forth in the Nicene creed. He united with his brother Constantius in calling a council at Sardica, in Illyria, in the year 347. “The intention was to unite, but it actually separated the two parties more than ever. Prayer and holy breathings of soul, and judicious and affectionate preaching of practical religion, were now at a low ebb. Peaceable spirits were absorbed in superstition, turbulent ones in ecclesiastical contentions. The life of faith was little known. They treated the doctrine of the Trinity as a mere speculation, and the result of their disputes was, that each party retired as they entered upon them. The easterns finding that it was likely to be a free council, departed from it, leaving the westerns to settle matters as they pleased. Hosius of Corduba, the venerable president of Nice, presided here also, and the Athanasian cause was decided in the favour of the Alexandrian prelate. They made also some canons, in which they condemned the translation of bishops. The pious and zealous spirit of Hosius was chiefly concerned in these things. Remarkable are the words: ‘A pernicious custom must be rooted out. None have been found to pass

from a greater bishopric to a less. 'Therefore they are induced by avarice and ambition.' So reasoned and so ordained this council. But where the religion of the Holy Ghost, the religion of faith, hope, and charity, exist not, the canons of councils forbid in vain. There are several canons also which enjoin the residence of bishops, and which forbid their journeys to courts. The time also of bishops remaining in another diocese was fixed, in order to prevent the supplanting of their brethren. These things show the times: rules are not made, except to prevent abuses, which already exist.

"The easterns met at Philippopolis in Thrace, and excommunicated their brethren of the west; and for some time the two parties remained distant in this manner; while in Asia and Egypt the friends of the Nicene faith were treated with great cruelty. Into Europe the subtilties of this contention had not yet entered; men were there more simple, and followed the primitive faith in quietness and peace."^{*}

At length Constantius, intimidated by the threats of his brother Constans, wrote repeatedly to Athanasius to return into the east. The bishop doubted his sincerity, but at length acceded to his request. Constantius promised him with oaths that he would no more listen to calumnies against him.

"The return of Athanasius to Alexandria was a triumph. Religious zeal and joy appeared in the garb of the age, by a number devoting themselves to a monastic life. Acts of mercy and liberality were also abundantly performed. Every house seemed to be a church set apart for prayer. Such are the views which Athanasius himself gives us of the effects of his restoration:†

^{*} Fleury, c. 43.

† Athan. ad. Solit. See Fleury, b. xii. c. 52.

a number of his enemies retracted, and justified him in the most honourable manner."

But Constans dying, and Constantius becoming master of the world, persecution again revived. New calumnies were listened to "against Athanasius, and a council at Milan was convened in the year 355, in the presence of the emperor, who proposed to them an Arian creed, which he recommended by this argument, that God had declared in his favour by his victories. Prosperity, it seems, had not strengthened his reasoning powers, but, unhappily, had increased the depravity of his heart. Here appeared the magnanimous constancy of Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, and the pious self-denial of Eusebius, bishop of Vercellæ, in Italy. These prelates were animated with a sincere spirit of piety on this occasion, and answered, that the Nicene faith had always been the faith of the church. 'I ask not your advice,' says the emperor, 'and you shall not hinder me from following Arius, if I think fit.' The emperor's creed was read in the church; but the people, more sincere and more simple than the great, and more willingly attached to the doctrine of the Trinity, because they read it in their Bibles, rejected the faith of Constantius, and it was not pressed any farther. The condemnation of Athanasius was, however, insisted on, and Dionysius, bishop of Milan, and the two others just mentioned, were most unreasonably required to subscribe to it. 'Obey, or be banished,' was the imperious mandate. The bishops lifted up their hands to heaven, and told Constantius, that the empire was not his, but God's, and reminded him of the day of judgment. He drew his sword on them in a rage, but contented himself with ordering their banishment. Hilary, the deacon, was stripped and

scourged, and ridiculed by Ursatius and Valens, who had recanted some time ago. Hilary blessed God, and bore the indignity as a Christian. The greatest part of the bishops subscribed to the condemnation of Athanasius: a few only testified that the grace of God was still as powerful as ever in supporting his people, and in causing them to suffer gladly, rather than to sin."

Thus was the promise of Christ to his disciples, "in the world ye shall have tribulation," fulfilled.

"Hosius, bishop of Corduba, in Spain, was now a hundred years old. He was looked on as the first of bishops, had been a confessor under the Dioclesian persecution, had presided sixty years in the church, had guided the Nicene council, had been a principal person in the appointment of canons, and was held in universal respect. Constantius and the whole Christian party were sensible of the importance of such a character. Flattery and menaces were both employed to prevail on him to condemn Athanasius. A few lines of his answer to an imperious letter of the emperor's, may give us some idea of his spirit.* 'I confessed the first time in the persecution under Maximian, your great-grandfather. If you likewise desire to persecute me, I am ready still to suffer any thing rather than betray the truth. It is not so much a personal malice against Athanasius, as the love of heresy which influences these men. I myself invited them to come to me, and declared at the council of Sardica what they knew against him. They dared not; they all refused. Athanasius came afterwards to your court at Antioch: he desired his enemies might be sent for, that they might make good their accusations. Why do you still hearken to them who refused such fair

* Athan. ad Solit.

proposals? How can you endure Ursatius and Valens, after they have recanted and acknowledged their calumny in writing? Remember you are a mortal man; be afraid of the day of judgment. God hath given you the empire, and hath committed the church to our care. I write thus through my concern for your eternal welfare; but with respect to your requisition, I cannot agree with Arians, nor write against Athanasius. You act for his enemies, but in the day of judgment you must defend yourself alone. Constantius kept him a year at Sirmium, without respect to his age and infirmities. His orders addressed to the bishops were to condemn Athanasius, and to communicate with the Arians under pain of banishment. The judges were directed to see the execution of these things. Ursatius and Valens, whose instability should have destroyed their credit, assisted the persecution by informations: zealous heretics by force of arms were intruded in the place of the exiled; and Arianism seemed well nigh to have avenged the cause of fallen idolatry.

“The adventures of Athanasius himself in his sufferings were extraordinary. He was for some time preserved in the house of a pious woman with great care and fidelity. But we must not enlarge on the various hardships to which he was exposed: suffice it to mention some of the particular circumstances. Syrianus, a secular officer, came at night to his principal church at Alexandria, when the people were intent on their devotions. Numbers were murdered, others insulted and beaten. The intrepid prelate sat still in his chair, and directed the deacon to sing the 136th Psalm, the people answering, according to the custom of alternate singing, ‘For his mercy endureth forever.’ Which being finish-

ed, he bade the people return to their houses. As the soldiers advanced toward him, his clergy and people begged him to depart, which he refused, thinking it his duty to stay till they had all left the church. He was in a manner forced out by the clergy and monks, and conveyed safe from the guards. An unavailing protest was made by the people against these violences.

“The pagans took courage and assisted the heretics in the persecution, saying, the Arians have embraced our religion.* A bishop was found worthy to support these proceedings, George of Cappadocia, who began his usurpation in the year 356. Through his influence, supported by the secular arm, the friends of the Nicene faith were cruelly beaten, and some died under their anguish. A sub-deacon having been severely scourged, was sent to the mines, without being allowed time to dress his wounds, and he died on the road. Venerable aged bishops were sent into the deserts throughout Egypt, and Arianism reigned and glutted itself in blood. The episcopal office was sold to unworthy men; the profession of Arianism being the only requisite for the office. The cruelties of George provoked the Alexandrians to retaliation, but military force prevailed; and after this bishop had been once expelled, he returned still more terrible and more detested.”

Athanasius betook himself “to the deserts, and visited the monks, his most faithful adherents, who refused to discover him to his persecuting adversaries, and offered their throats to the sword, being ready to die for the Nicene faith. He filled up another part of his time in writing his own apology to Constantius. There are in it strong traces of that rapid eloquence and clear reason-

* Athan. ad Solit.

ing, for which this father is renowned. Integrity and fervour appear throughout; but it were to be wished, that less zeal on his own account, and more on account of his Divine Master were visible in this as well as in his other writings. In truth, the connexion of the doctrine of the Trinity with the honour of Christ, and with lively faith in his mediation, is so plain, that practical, serious, humble religion, if it exists at all in any scene of controversy, must be found on that side. Men, who degrade the Divine Saviour into a creature, will of course exalt themselves, and cannot have that humility and faith which are the essential ingredients of a holy life."

The bishop of Rome, after two years exile, was at length seduced, with others, to subscribe an Arian creed, and the proverb of those days seemed to be verified: "All the world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the world."

"But the power of Divine grace was displayed during this disastrous season in preserving a remnant, and particularly in strengthening the mind of that great man, through a long course of afflictions."

"Christendom groaned throughout under the weight of extorted Arian subscriptions; and Macedonius, the deposed bishop of Constantinople, formed another sect of those who were enemies to the divinity of the Holy Ghost. These, by the advantage of sober manners, spread themselves among the monasteries, and increased the corruption which then pervaded the Christian world. But the vigilant spirit of Athanasius was stirred up to oppose this heresy also. 'The Father cannot be Son, nor the Son Father,' says he, 'and the Holy Ghost is never called by the name of Son, but is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. The holy Trinity is but one

divine nature, and one God, with which a creature cannot be joined. This is sufficient for the faithful. Human knowledge goes no farther; the cherubims veil the rest with their wings.’”

CHAPTER IV.

Missionary Labours.—Monasticism.

WE are informed by an ancient historian, that a remote region, supposed to be Abyssinia, was visited with the gospel in the following manner. Meropius, a Tyrian philosopher, disposed to travel, “took with him two boys, his relations, who understood the Greek tongue. Arriving at a certain harbour, the natives murdered the whole company, except the two boys, who were presented to the king, and finding favour in his eyes, were promoted in his court. Upon the king’s death, the queen dowager engaged them to superintend the affairs of the realm, and the education of the young prince. Their names were *Ædesius* and *Frumentius*. But the latter was prime minister. The man, however, had his eyes fixed on higher objects than the politics of the country. He met with some Roman merchants, who traded there, and asked them if they found any Christians in the kingdom. Having discovered some by their means, he encouraged them to associate for the purposes of religious worship, and at length erected a church for their use, and certain natives, instructed in the gospel, were converted to the faith. On the king’s accession to the administration, *Frumentius* desired leave to return to his own country, which both the king and his mother were

very reluctant to allow. He left the country, however, with *Ædesius*. The latter returned to his relations at Tyre, while *Frumentius*, arriving at Alexandria, communicated his adventures to *Athanasius*, the bishop, and informed him of the probability of evangelizing the country, if missionaries were sent thither. On mature consideration, *Athanasius* told him, that none was so fit for the office as himself. He consecrated him therefore the first bishop, and this active missionary returning to a country, where his integrity and capacity had already been distinguished, preached the gospel with much success, and erected many churches. Thus was the gospel planted in a barbarous kingdom, where the extreme ignorance of the natives would much facilitate its external progress at least, under the episcopal labours of a man, who had educated their sovereign; then at least, most probably, there were many real conversions, and a time of copious effusion of the Spirit of God.* And the difficulty of access to this region, which has since proved so prejudicial to the advancement of knowledge among its inhabitants, was at that time a happy preservative to the infant church. It was in vain, that *Constantius* laboured to poison it with his beloved Arianism. He gave orders that *Frumentius* should be deposed, and that an Arian successor should be appointed; but the country was happily out of the reach of his imperial bigotry."

The Abyssinians to this day glory in the labours of their first bishop, *Frumentius*.

The Iberians on the Black Sea are said to have re-

* The absolute despotism of the Abyssinian princes, and the probability that the sovereign before us received Christianity, would account for the establishment of the gospel through the whole country. And the inaccessible situation and profound ignorance of Abyssinia will account for the continuance of nominal Christianity to this day.

ceived the truth, and we are informed that the Sabæans of Arabia Felix had a bishop sent them, and churches erected.

“The ecclesiastical accounts of Britain are so fabulous, or at best so scanty, that it is a pleasure to be able to relate any thing that has the marks of historical authenticity. At the council of Ariminum, held on account of the Arian heresy, the emperor Constantius gave orders to supply the expenses of the bishops out of the public treasury. While the rest accepted the imperial munificence, the bishops of Gaul and Britain thought it unbecoming the ecclesiastical character to receive secular maintenance, and bore their own expenses. Only three from Britain were so poor, that they were unable to maintain themselves. Their brethren offered by a contribution to supply their wants; but they chose rather to be obliged to the emperor’s bounty, than to burden their brethren. Gavidius, a French bishop, reproached them for this; but Severus, the relater of the story, thinks it was a circumstance much redounding to their credit.* So I apprehend it will appear to the reader, and we regret that where there are such evident vestiges of primitive and disinterested simplicity, we should know so little of the lives and characters of men quite remote from the scenes of ecclesiastical turbulence and ambition. Probably in Britain the gospel flourished at this time in humble obscurity.”

Gregory, bishop of Armenia, was honoured as the instrument of bringing over Tiridates, the king, and all his nobles, to a profession of Christianity. Among the Goths near the Danube, and the nations bordering on the Rhine, the Lord Jesus was honoured.

* Sulpit. Sev. b. ii. c. 55.

Armenia conveyed the gospel to Persia. There, however, through the instrumentality of the Magi and the Jews, persecution raged, and thousands suffered.

Monasticism originated in the superstition of weak minds, but in its commencement it had not the corruption which has distinguished its later days. Persecution drove some into deserts, and some took up their abode there from a mistaken opinion that they could serve God more effectually in retirement: forgetting that Divine grace is sufficient for all scenes of duty, and that men were born for usefulness.

Anthony, the most renowned leader of the monks, obeyed literally the injunction, "Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor." He was opulent, and he voluntarily became poor, and persevered in a state of poverty to the age of 105 years. He refused to be instructed in literature, and continued in comparative ignorance, as well as poverty. The Spirit of God evidently influenced his heart, for he preached well by his life and his temper. "In the persecution by Dioclesian, he left his beloved solitude, and came to Alexandria, strengthening the minds of Christian sufferers, exposing himself to danger for the love of the brethren, and yet not guilty of the excess of delivering up himself to martyrdom. In all this there was what was better than the monk,—the sincere and charitable Christian. Nor did he observe to perfection the rules of solitude. There were two sorts of monks, the solitary, and those who lived in societies. Anthony, though he had a strong inclination to follow the first sort altogether, sometimes joined the latter, and even on some occasions appeared in the world.

"The Arian heresy gave him another opportunity of showing his zeal. He again entered Alexandria, and

protested against its impiety, which, he observed, was of a piece with heathenism itself. 'Be assured,' said he, 'all nature is moved with indignation against those, who reckon the Creator of all things to be a creature.' And this is one circumstance, which convinces me that genuine godliness, the offspring of Christian principles, must have been with the primitive monks, because they generally vindicated the Nicene faith, and could not endure Arianism. They must, many of them at least, have felt the motions of the divine life, which will not connect itself with any principles that depreciate the dignity of Jesus Christ.

"In conversing with Pagan philosophers, he observed, that Christianity held the mystery, not in the wisdom of Grecian reasoning, but in the power of faith supplied to them from God by Jesus Christ. 'Faith,' says he, 'springs from the affection of the mind; logic from artificial contrivance. Those who have the energy that is by faith, need not perhaps the demonstration that comes by reasoning.' He very justly appealed to the glorious fruits of Christianity in the world, and exhorted the philosophers 'to believe and know that the Christian art is not merely verbal, but of faith which worketh by love, with which ye being once endowed, shall not need demonstrations by arguments, but shall deem these words of Anthony sufficient to lead you to the faith of Christ.'"

"In his extreme old age he gave particular directions, that his body should be interred, not preserved in a house after the Egyptian manner of honouring deceased saints and martyrs, and charged his two attendants to let no man know the place of his burial. 'At the resurrection of the dead I shall receive my body,' says he, 'from the Saviour incorruptible.' He guarded his friends against

the Arian heresy, and bade them not to be disturbed, though the judicial power, an imaginary fading domination, should be against them. ‘Do ye observe what ye have received from the fathers, and particularly the pious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which ye have heard from the Scriptures, and of which I have often reminded you. Divide my clothes in this manner: give one of my sheep-skins to the bishop Athanasius, together with the garment, which I received from him when new, and now return him when old. And give the other sheep-skin to Serapion the bishop. The sackcloth keep for yourselves,’ says he to his two attendants. ‘Farewell, children, Anthony is going, and is no more with you.’ He stretched out his feet, and appearing pleased at the sight of his friends coming to him, he expired with evident marks of cheerfulness on his face. His last will was punctually executed.” There were others like him, but few who were his equals.

CHAPTER V.

Julian the Apostate.

THOUGH Paganism had been completely overturned, many retained their attachment to it. Encouraged by the false philosophers, who, whatever some of them pretended, loved the pride of speculation more than godliness, and urged by their lusts, which prompted to idolatry, some wished a restoration of Jupiter to his throne. During the reign of Constantius, they could gain nothing. Though the persecution by Arianism was after their spirit,

Christ was nominally served by all. Under Julian, however, their hopes revived.

In early life Julian was a professor of Christianity. He was made a public reader in the church at Nicomedia, and affected great zeal. At the same time he was at heart a Pagan. He offered up his prayers in the church in public, and at midnight rose to pay his devotions to Mercury. The cruelty of Constantius to his relations, was calculated to increase his paganism, and the spectacle which the dominant party of Arians presented, had certainly no tendency to lessen it.

On his succeeding to the empire, in 361, he threw off the mask. The temples were set open, new ones built; altars once more blazed to Jupiter, and the whole array of idols again appeared.

At the same time, like those of modern day, who first deny faith in Christ, and then tell men to be moral, he issued directions to the magistrates to correct vice, and to the priests to be holy. He counselled them to imitate the Christians in their lives. He ordained lectures, and stated times for prayer, and monasteries, and hospitals; thus profiting by the example of Christians. "The Galileans," said he, "relieve both their own poor and ours." He assailed Christianity by ridicule, and was a kind of Voltaire of his day. He made sacrificing to his gods necessary to procuring places of honour and profit. He threatened the bishops, seized their incomes, and in various ways sought pretence to torture, though he boasted that he did not persecute. He was aware that open persecution would build up the cause he wished to destroy. "They will crowd as fast to martyrdom," said he, "as bees to their hives."

As one means of opposing the Christians, he en-

couraged the Jews. He urged them to rebuild their temple, and promised to pay the expense, hoping thereby to invalidate the prophecies. In this, however, he was frustrated. An ancient writer of unquestioned veracity, informs us, "he projected to rebuild the magnificent temple of Jerusalem. He committed the conduct of the affair to Alypius of Antioch; who set himself to the vigorous execution of his charge, and was assisted by the governor of the province; but horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations with repeated attacks, rendered the place inaccessible to the scorched workmen from time to time, and the element resolutely driving them to a distance, the enterprise was dropped."^{*} This testimony is fully corroborated.

He forbade Christian schoolmasters teaching Gentile learning, and encouraged false philosophers. He sought to entrap the soldiers into idolatry, defiled the fountains with Gentile sacrifices, and sprinkled the food brought to market with hallowed water.

Thus did he exert the greatest talents, with the greatest earthly power, against the gospel.

He wrote a letter of commendation to Photimus, the heretic who denied the Divinity of Christ.

This conduct on the part of Julian, gave an opportunity for the real gold of faith to manifest itself. Those who loved not the Lord Jesus in sincerity, could not stand the trial.

"Mark, the bishop of Arethusa in Syria, being ordered to pay the expense of rebuilding an idolatrous temple, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius, and refusing from conscientious motives, was tortured in an

* Ammianus, b. xxiii. c. 1

uncommon manner, and bore his sufferings with such astonishing patience, that the prefect said to Julian, ‘Is it not a shame, sir, that the Christians should be so much superior to us, and that an old man, over whom victory itself would be inglorious, should conquer us?’ He was at length dismissed; and a number, who had persecuted him, attended afterwards to his instructions. The bishop had saved the life of Julian in the beginning of the reign of Constantius, when all his family was in danger!”

Athanasius remained long in concealment. At length, however, on the murder of the bishop of Alexandria by the pagans, he returned to his bishopric. “During the little time that he was allowed to appear in public, he acted as a Christian bishop, treating his enemies with mildness, and relieving the distressed without respect to persons, restoring the custom of preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, removing from the sanctuary those who had made a traffic of holy things, and gaining the hearts of the people.”

“Athanasius was not allowed to enjoy long the sweets of liberty. The Gentile Alexandrian represented to the emperor, that he corrupted the city and all Egypt, and that if he continued there, not a pagan would be left. Julian’s affected moderation was tried to the utmost in this case; and the open spirit of persecution, which, contrary to his deliberate maxims he displayed on this occasion, does immortal honour to the talents and integrity of the Egyptian prelate. ‘I allowed those Galileans,’ says he, ‘who had been banished, to return to their countries, not to their churches.* I order Athanasius to leave the

* Jul. Epis. 26. A distinction certainly unfounded, because contrary to the permission granted to all the rest of the bishops.

city on the receipt of my letter.’” All entreaties were in vain. He was only provoked by them. “Athanasius was therefore obliged once more to seek safety by flight. All the faithful gathered round him weeping. ‘We must retire a little time, friends,’ says he; ‘it is a cloud that will soon fly over.’ He took leave of them, recommending his church to the ablest of his friends, and going on board a vessel, he fled by the Nile into the obscurer parts of Egypt. Still his life was in imminent danger. The persecutors followed, and were not far from him, which induced Athanasius to use something of that craftiness with which Julian charged him.* He directed his companions to return to Alexandria, and to meet his enemies. The pursuers asked them earnestly, ‘Have you seen Athanasius?’—‘He is near,’ say they; ‘make haste, and you will soon overtake him.’ Thus deluded, they went forward with speed in vain; and the bishop, who had secreted himself during this scene, returned in private to Alexandria, where he lay concealed till the end of the persecution. Thus did the malice of Julian expose this great and good man, to use the same sort of artifices, which David did, when persecuted by king Saul, who made the same remark as Julian did, ‘It is told me that he dealeth very subtilly;† a conduct which probably extorted from him afterwards that prayer, ‘Remove from me the way of lying.’”

Julian was so provoked by the psalmody of the Christians at Antioch, “particularly the chorus which they used, ‘Confounded be all they that worship graven images,’ that he ordered his Prætorian prefect, Sallust, to punish them.” But his own career was drawing to a

* Sozomen, b. v. c. 15. Socrates, b. iii. c. 14.

† 1 Sam. xxiii. 22.

close. He engaged in a war against the Persians, in which "he received a mortal wound from a Persian lance in a skirmish. We are told, that, conscious of his approaching end, he filled his hand with the blood, and casting it into the air, said, '*O Galilean, thou hast conquered.*'"^{*} "He died after a reign of one year and eight months, in the thirty-second year of his age. A man of good understanding, who taught children at Antioch, was in company with Libanius, who asked him what the carpenter's son was doing. It was smartly replied, '*the Maker of the world, whom you jocosely call the carpenter's son, is employed in making a coffin.*' A few days after, tidings came to Antioch of Julian's death."[†]

Such a persecutor was wanted to display more abundantly the power of the Redeemer in preserving the church. Not only were the heretics punished, and believers purified, by trial, but the faithfulness of Him who said *the gates of Hell shall not prevail*, was abundantly made manifest.

CHAPTER VI.

Jovian.—Vulens.—Death of Athanasius.—Valentinian.

JOVIAN succeeded to the empire in 363. He was faithful during the life of Julian, declaring he would rather quit the service than his religion; and there is reason to believe he was indeed a Christian. His reign, however, was only seven months in duration. While it continued he obeyed the precepts of Christ, even in his

* Theodoret, b. iii. c. 25.

† Theodoret.

political intercourse with heathen nations. He was an example to those statesmen who call themselves Christians at the present day, for he feared the loss of the favour of God more than the loss of a temporal advantage, and he clung to the faith of treaties to his great disadvantage. He acted for eternity, and according to a wisdom more profitable to his empire than that of this world.

“ Athanasius had no sooner heard of the death of Julian, than he suddenly appeared again at Alexandria, to the agreeable surprise of his people. A letter from Jovian confirmed him in his office, and it was conceived in these terms: ‘ To the most religious friend of God, Athanasius. As we admire beyond expression the sanctity of your life, in which shine forth the marks of resemblance to the God of the universe,* and your zeal for Jesus Christ our Saviour, we take you, venerable bishop, under our protection. You deserve it, by the courage which you have shown in the most painful labours, and your contempt of persecutors and menacing words. Holding in your hand the helm of faith, which is so dear to you, you cease not to combat for the truth, nor to edify the Christian people, who find in you the perfect model of all virtues. For these reasons we recall you immediately, and we order you to return, to teach the

“ * Mr. Gibbon calls this impious and extravagant flattery. Who but a person either exceedingly prejudiced or ignorant would have hazarded such an assertion. I scruple not to charge the learned critic with both. His prejudice will not allow him to bear a short interval of the prosperity of Athanasius with patience, and his ignorance of the Scriptures has led him here to express his prejudice with peculiar absurdity. Every child in divinity knows, that to say, a man resembles God, or bears his image and likeness, means no more, than “that he is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,” that he is what Adam was before the fall, what every Christian is made by grace. What an immensity of learning do some men attain, without knowing the very elements of the New Testament!”

doctrine of salvation. Return to the holy churches; feed the people of God. Let the pastor at the head of the flock offer up prayers for our person; for we are persuaded that God will diffuse on us and on our fellow Christians his signal favours, if you afford the assistance of your prayers.'

"Jovian wrote to him again, to ask instruction with respect to the Arian controversy. Athanasius, entering into his views, convened some bishops, and answered him in the name of the synod, recommending to him the Nicene faith, and defending it in his usual manner. Jovian directed him to come to Antioch, where he was graciously received. Arian and Candidus, two Arians, relations also of the emperor, came to him at Antioch, having conceived some hopes of his favour. Euzoius, also, the bishop of that city, where Arianism was strong, and some other Arians, laboured to ingratiate themselves with the eunuchs of the palace, as their party had done in the reign of Constantius. The Macedonians too, the followers of the deposed bishop of Constantinople, who had taught them to deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, solicited the emperor for the predominancy in the church. 'I hate disputes,' replied Jovian; 'I love and honor men of peace, and promoters of union.' The Arians confounded with such a sentence, communicated with Meletius, the orthodox bishop of Antioch, and subscribed the council of Nice. It is difficult to believe their sincerity; under any the most moderate account that can be given of the controversy, Arian duplicity must strike every reader. At any rate Jovian was not to blame; he plainly declared, that he would constrain no man, and he said so sincerely. But power, not mere toleration, was their object."

The Arians pursued Athanasius afterward with great malignity, but Jovian protected him. He was not willing to persecute even the Pagans, but allowed them the use of their temples.

Valentinian and Valens, two brothers, succeeded him; the former in the west, the latter in the east. Valens, a weak man, easily governed, yielded himself to the Arians, and expelled the orthodox from Constantinople. His power was directed against Athanasius, and a fourth time was that champion driven from Alexandria. He remained four months concealed in his father's sepulchre. "Valens, however, from the dread he seems to have had of the people, ordered him to be recalled, nor could Lucius, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, prevail on him to give Athanasius any more disturbance."

A council held at Laodicea in Phrygia passed several canons, one of which solemnly forbid the invocation of angels, a species of idolatry which it appears was beginning to creep in.

Persecution raged against the faithful. Eighty ecclesiastics were sent from Constantinople to Nicomedia to complain of the emperor's conduct in banishing their bishop. "Enraged at their presumption, and yet afraid of a sedition, Valens gave private orders to Modestus, his prefect, to murder them secretly. The execution of this order deserves to be known in all ages. The prefect pretended, that he would send them into banishment, with which they cheerfully acquiesced. But he directed the mariners to set the ship on fire, as soon as they were gone to sea. The mariners did so, and going into a boat which followed them, escaped. The burning vessel was driven by a strong west wind into the haven of Dacidizus, on the coast of Bithynia, where it was consumed with

the ministers.* The intention of concealing what was done, was frustrated; and the wickedness and inhumanity of the murder appeared more odious, by the meanness with which it was contrived."

"Athanasius had the courage to expel from the church the governor of Lybia, a man wholly given up to cruelty and debauchery: nor was the world then so degenerated, as to despise altogether the discipline of the church. A council held at Antioch by the faithful, consisting of an hundred and forty-six bishops, pathetically bewailed the times: and among other things, they observed, that the infidels laughed at these evils, and staggered the weak; while true Christians avoiding the churches, as being now nurseries of impiety, went into deserts, and lifted up their hands to God with sighs and tears.

"Meletius, who was the chief of this council, was banished the third time, and sent into Armenia, his own country. The other bishop, Paulinus, whose flock was small, was spared. The Meletians, deprived of their churches, assembled at the foot of a mountain near Antioch, and heard the word of God. But from this place also they were driven, and many of them were thrown into the Orontes."

"At Edessa, the orthodox were wont to meet in a field; Valens ordered them to be dispersed; but the resolution of a woman who hastened thither as on purpose to suffer martyrdom, staggered his mind, and caused him to cease from the attempt.

"Another method was taken: the pastors of Edessa were sent into banishment; some of them were conducted to Antinous,† where observing the greater part of the

* Socrates, b. iv. c. 16.

† A place, I suppose, in Thebais, in Egypt.

inhabitants to be Pagans, they employed themselves in taking pains for their eternal salvation. Protogenes particularly taught the children to write and to read the psalms of David, and suitable passages of the New Testament; and though the account we have here is very defective, there is reason to believe, that the progress of the gospel was increased by these means.*

“ Athanasius died in the year 373, after he had been bishop forty-six years; and being desired to nominate a successor, he mentioned Peter, an aged saint, and the faithful companion of his labours.”

“ The choice of Peter, as his successor at Alexandria, was confirmed by the whole church; and the almost universal respect which was paid to the virtues of Athanasius, seemed to put his election out of the reach of controversy. But imperial violence prevailed. By Euzoius of Antioch, Valens was stirred up to oppose Peter, and Lucius, whom Jovian had so contemptuously rejected, was introduced by the power of the sword. Then† was seen the insolent cruelty of Magnus, a Pagan, whom the mercy of Jovian had spared. Many Athanasians were murdered, and many treated with great outrages; while Arianism, supported by the civil powers, triumphed without control. Nineteen priests and deacons, some very old, were seized by Magnus. ‘Agree, wretches,’ said the Pagan, ‘to the sentiments of the Arians. If your religion be true, God will forgive you for yielding to necessity.’ ‘Forbear to importune us,’ they replied, ‘we do not believe that God is sometimes Father, and sometimes not. Our fathers at Nice confessed, that the Son is consubstantial with the Father.’ Whips and tortures, the grief of the godly, and the insults of Jews and Apos-

* Fleury, 32. B. v. † Theod. iv. 22.

tates, altered not their determination: they were banished to Heliopolis in Phœnicia. Palladius, a Pagan, the governor of Egypt, sent many to prison, who had presumed to weep; and after he had scourged them, sent twenty-three of them, chiefly monks, to work in the mines. Other scenes of savage cruelty are related; it is tedious and unpleasant to enlarge on them; but it is a pleasure to behold the fruits of Athanasius's labours in the faithful sufferings of so many of his followers. Euzoius, having put Lucius and his Arians into the possession of the churches, and left Alexandria in tears, returned to Antioch. What a bishop was this!"

"The monks of Egypt, whose piety moved the common people, were courted by the Arian party; but they offered their necks to the sword, rather than quit the Nicene profession. A number of these were banished, but were afterwards permitted to return.* Peter himself, though imprisoned, found means to escape, and in Europe, where Arianism had no power, he enjoyed a quiet exile."

"Valens perished in a battle with the Goths in the year 378, after having reigned fourteen years. A little before his death, he recalled the exiled bishops. Lucius was driven from Alexandria; Peter recovered his See, and Arianism lost its external dominion a little before the death of its benefactor."

Under Valentinian, the church in the west enjoyed comparative repose. He, however, was deceived by the Arian bishop of Milan, who, according to the practice of all heretics, used ambiguous forms of speech, and dwelt largely on the excellence of Christ, and thus gained permission to remain at his post, and silently to undermine

* Sozomen, vi. 20.

the truth. To this man Ambrose succeeded, who, against his own will, was forced to be a bishop. The account of him deserves to be given at large.

CHAPTER VII.

Ambrose.

“AMBROSE succeeded the Arian, Auxentius, at Milan, who died in the year 374. He was born about the year 338, while his father was the emperor’s lieutenant in France. He was the youngest of three children, Marcellina and Satyrus being born before him. After his father’s decease,* his mother, with the family, returned to Rome, where he made himself master of all the learning that Greece and Latium could afford; at the same time his sister Marcellina, who had devoted herself to a state of virginity, instructed him with much success in the principles of godliness. Being grown to maturity, he pleaded causes with so much dexterity, that he was soon taken notice of by Anicius Probus, pretorian prefect of Italy, who made choice of him to be of his council: and having authority to appoint governors to several provinces, when he gave a commission to him, he said, ‘Go, and govern more like a bishop than a judge.’ Ambrose in this office resided at Milan for five years, and was renowned for prudence and justice; when one of those sudden turns of providence, which are so conspicuous in the lives of many persons of eminent godliness, threw him into a course of life extremely different from his former.

* See Paulinus’s Life of Ambrose, prefixed to the works of that Saint. Cave; Fleury.

“ Auxentius, by artifice and dexterity had, as we have seen, imposed on Valentinian, and preserved his seat to his death in the year 374. Immediately the bishops of the province met together concerning the election of a successor. The emperor sent for them, and told them, that they, as men best acquainted with the sacred volume, ought to understand better than he the qualifications necessary for so important a station. ‘Choose a man,’ said he, ‘fit to instruct by life as well as by doctrine, and we ourselves will readily submit our sceptres to his counsels and direction, and as men obnoxious to human frailty, will receive his reproofs and admonitions as wholesome physic.’ The bishops besought him to nominate the person, but Valentinian was resolute in referring the determination to them, as fitter than himself to decide.* In the mean time factions were strong, and the Arian party vigorously laboured to provide a successor worthy of Auxentius. The city was divided, every thing tended toward a tumult, the bishops were consulting, and Ambrose, hearing of these things, hastened to the church of Milan, and exhorted the people to peace and submission to the laws. His speech being finished, an infant’s voice was heard in the crowd, ‘Ambrose is bishop.’ The hint was taken at once, the whole assembly cried out, ‘Ambrose shall be the man.’ The factious agreed immediately,† and he whom secular pursuits had seemed to preclude from the notice of either party, was suddenly elected by universal consent.

* Those who have learnt from modern politics to exclude men of the sacred office from any regard in the councils of princes, will despise the weakness of Valentinian. Those who remember how useful the advice of Jehoiada was to Joash, and who believe that piety and the fear of God are of some consequence in the conduct of human affairs, will commend his conscientiousness and his modesty.

† Soc. b. iv. 30. Soz. b. vi. 24.

“ Ambrose was astonished, and peremptorily refused; nor was any person ever more desirous to obtain the office of a bishop, than he was to avoid it. He even used methods which sound strange in our ears, and are by no means justifiable. By exercising severity on malefactors, and by encouraging harlots to come into his house, he took pains to convince them, that he was not that character of mildness and chastity, which he undoubtedly was, and which all believed him to be. This extraordinary hypocrisy was, however, easily detected. Finding it was vain to stem the torrent, he stole out of Milan at midnight, but missing his way, and wandering all night, he found himself in the morning at the gate of Milan. A guard was placed about his person, till the emperor's pleasure should be known, because his consent was necessary to part with a subject in office. Valentinian sincerely consented; and the consent of Ambrose himself alone was wanting. It is pleasing to see the testimony which the human mind, when left to itself, in all ages gives in favour of modesty and integrity, in consequence of the law written on the heart, which all the corruption of nature and the artifice of Satan cannot easily efface. Ambrose again made his escape, and hid himself in the country-house of a friend. A menacing edict of the emperor brought him again to Milan, because he dared not expose his friend to the resentment of the emperor. Ambrose yielded at length, and Valentinian gave thanks to God and our Saviour, that it had pleased him to make choice of the very person to take care of men's souls, whom he had himself before appointed to preside over their temporal concerns. Valentinian received his general admonitions with reverence; and in particular, hearing him represent the faults of some in

authority with great plainness: ‘I knew,’ said the emperor, ‘the honesty of your character before this time, yet I consented to your ordination; follow the divine rules, and cure the maladies into which we are prone to fall.’

“Ambrose was then about thirty-six years old. Immediately he gave to the church and to the poor all the gold and silver which he had. He gave also his lands to the church, reserving the annual income of them for the use of his sister Marcellina. His family he committed to the care of his brother Satyrus. Thus disengaged from temporal concerns, he gave up himself wholly to the ministry. Having read little else than profane authors, he first applied himself to the study of the scriptures. Whatever time he could spare from business he devoted to reading; and this he continued to do after he had attained a good degree of knowledge.* I wish Origen had been less the object of his study. But the renown of that father was great, and this was not an age of evangelical perspicuity. His public labours went hand in hand with his studies. He preached every Lord’s day. Arianism through his labours was expelled from Italy.”

The sin of Ambrose, in endeavouring to create a wrong impression concerning his character, we ought to avoid; but the deep sense he had of the awful nature of the sacred office is to us instructive. In these latter days how many rush forward to ordination, without thinking of any thing more than the enjoyment of literary leisure, or the possession of a reputable calling. If it be wrong to go thoughtlessly into the house of God, what must be the guilt of those who enter without right motives into the service of the sanctuary.

* Aug. Confess. b. vi. c. 3.

Valentinian dying in 375, he was succeeded, in Gaul, Spain and Britain, by Gratian. He, with becoming piety, refused the title of high priest, usually given to the Roman princes, because it was connected with the worship of idols. He also chose Theodosius his colleague in the East, and watched with great care over the concerns of his infant brother, who was left ruler of Italy.

Desirous of instruction, he wrote the following letter to the bishop of Milan.

“ ‘Gratian Augustus to Ambrose the religious priest of Almighty God. I much desire to be present in body with him whom I remember absent, and with whom I am united in mind. Come to me immediately, holy priest, that you may teach the doctrine of salvation to one who truly believes; not that he may study for contention, or seek to embrace God rather verbally than mentally, but that the revelation of the Divinity may dwell more intimately in my breast. For He whom I do not deny, whom I own as my Lord and my God, will not fail to teach me. I would not conceive so meanly of him as to make him a mere creature like myself, who own that I can add nothing to Christ. And yet while I seek to please the Father in celebrating the Son, I do not fear lest the Father should envy the honours ascribed to his Son; nor do I think so highly of my powers of commendation, as to suppose that I can increase the Divinity by my words. I am weak and frail, I extol him as I can, not as the Divinity deserves. With respect to that treatise which you gave me, I beg you would make additions to it by scriptural arguments, to prove the proper Deity of the Holy Ghost.’ Ambrose, delighted with the vein of serious attention to divine subjects, which appears in this letter, answered him in an ecstasy of satisfaction.—

‘Most Christian prince,’ says he, ‘modesty, not want of affection, has hitherto prevented me from waiting upon you. If, however, I was not with you personally, I have been present with my prayers, in which consists still more the duty of a pastor. I use no flattery: you need it not; and moreover it is quite foreign to my office. Our Judge whom you confess, and in whom you piously believe, knows that my bowels are refreshed with your faith, your salvation, and your glory; and that I pray for you not only as in public duty bound, but even with personal affection.—He alone hath taught you, who said, He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father.’ Toward the close, he reminds him that his own arguments for the divinity of the Son, expressed in his letter, are equally conclusive for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, whom we ought not to think the Father to envy, nor ourselves to be on an equal footing with him, who are mere creatures. Some writings of Ambrose remain to us as the consequence of Gratian’s requests.”

Under the influence of his sister, Ambrose allowed himself to be led away into great respect for the superstition of the times. This, however, did not prevent his selling the sacred vessels to redeem those who were in captivity.

Such was his admirable diligence in the instruction of catechumen, that it is said of him that “five bishops could scarcely go through so much labour as he alone.”

In Constantinople, the Nicene creed was introduced under Theodosius, so that the truth began again to flourish. A council of 350 bishops was held there, which, though not equal to that of Nice, accurately defined the doctrine of the Trinity. The Macedonian heresy, which blasphemed the Holy Ghost, led them, in their enlarge-

ment of the creed, to a more explicit statement of the scripture representation of the third Person. Thus, in every age, does heresy contribute to the dissemination of truth.

By a council held at Aquileia, the two chief supporters of Arianism in the West were formally deposed. The dexterity of their evasions was remarkable. While seeming to honour the Son of God in the highest degree, they still reserved their error.

Gratian being murdered, Maximus the usurper rose in his room. Under him, Priscillian, whose heresy united all the most pernicious errors of former times, came into notice. "He was learned, eloquent, factious, acute, of great powers both of body and mind, and by a spurious modesty and gravity of manners, extremely well qualified to maintain an ascendancy over weak and credulous spirits." He, with several of his followers, was put to death, contrary to the earnest entreaties of the good Martin, bishop of Tours, who declared that for a secular judge to interfere in ecclesiastical affairs was a new and unheard of evil. Ambrose coming to the court of Maximus some time after, on an embassy from the younger Valentinian, refused to hold communion with his bishops who had been concerned in the murder of heretics. Maximus, enraged, ordered him to withdraw. Ambrose entered upon his journey very readily, being only grieved to find an old bishop, Hyginus, dragged into exile, though it was evident that he was very near his end. The generous bishop of Milan applied to some of the courtiers, to furnish him with conveniences,* but in vain. A number of holy men, who protested against these barbarities, were

* Ambrose, Ep. 27.

themselves aspersed with the charge of heresy, and among the rest Martin of Tours. "Thus in Gaul and Spain there were three parties; first, the Priscillianists, men void of godliness evidently, and bearing the Christian name to disgrace it with a complication of heresies; secondly, men of formal orthodoxy, who persecuted the Priscillianists even to death, and ruined them as a sect, at the same time that they themselves disgraced the gospel by a life of avarice, faction, and ambition; and thirdly, men who feared God and served him in the gospel of his Son, condemning the principles of the former by argument only, and the practices of the latter by their meek and charitable conduct. A division of men, not uncommon in the church of Christ; but let it be remembered, that the last sort are the true branches of the mystical vine."

"Martin was born at Ticinum in Italy, and in his youth had served in the army under Constantius and Julian; but against his will. His father, by profession a soldier, had compelled him. For he himself, when only ten years old, went to the church, and gave in his name as a catechumen.* At twelve he had a desire to lead a monastic life. But being compelled to serve in the army, he was remarkable for his exemption from military vices, his liberality to the poor, and his reservation of nothing for himself out of the pay which he received, except what was necessary for daily food. At eighteen he was baptized, and two years afterwards left the army. Some time after, falling into the hands of robbers among the Alps, he was delivered bound to one of them to be plundered, who, leading him to a retired place, asked him, who he was. He answered, 'I am a Christian.' 'Are not you

* A candidate for baptism.

afraid?’ ‘I never was more at ease, because I know the mercy of the Lord to be most present in trials: I am more concerned for you, who by your course of life render yourself unfit to partake of the mercy of Christ.’ And entering into the argument of religion, he preached the Gospel to the robber. The man believed, attended his instructor to the road, and begged his prayers.”

“Maximus courted the friendship of Martin in vain, who honestly owned, that he could not countenance a murderer and usurper. Maximus pleaded necessity, the providence of God, and that he had slain none except in the field. Overcome at length by importunities, the bishop supped with the usurper. A servant offered the cup to Maximus who directed him to give it to Martin, expecting and desiring to pledge him. The bishop disappointed his hopes, and gave it to his presbyter.”

[NOTE.—A History of the Church is, necessarily, in great measure a compilation. Though new remarks may be made, and the narrative occasionally thrown into new form, nothing is gained by writing over again all the details of facts. Marks of quotation, therefore, will hereafter be frequently omitted.]

CHAPTER VIII.

Ambrose under Persecution.—His Death.

THE truth was at length assaulted by both heretics and pagans. The pagans endeavoured to gain a restoration, of at least some part of their ancient establishment; but the eloquence of Ambrose was too powerful for them.

Justina, the empress, was a decided patroness of Arianism. After the death of her husband, she began openly to season her son with her doctrine, and to induce him to menace the bishop of Milan. Ambrose ex-

horted him to support the doctrine received from the Apostles. Young Valentinian, in a rage, ordered his guards to surround the church, and commanded Ambrose to come out of it. 'I shall not willingly,' replied the bishop, 'give up the sheep of Christ to be devoured by wolves. You may use your swords and spears against me; such a death I shall freely undergo.*' After this he was exposed to the various frauds and artifices of Justina, who feared to attack him openly. For the people were generally inclined to support the bishop; and his residence in the city where the court was held, at once increased his influence, and exercised his mind with a series of trials.

In the year 386, Justina procured a law to enable the Arian congregations to assemble without interruption.

Auxentius, a Scythian, of the same name with the Arian predecessor of Ambrose, was now introduced, under the protection of the empress, into Milan. He challenged Ambrose to hold a disputation with him in the emperor's court; which occasioned the bishop to write to Valentinian, that it was no part of the emperor's business to decide in points of doctrine.† 'Let him come to church,' says he, 'and upon hearing, let the people judge for themselves; and if they like Auxentius better, let them take him: but they have already declared their sentiments.' More violent measures were now entered into, and the fortitude of Ambrose was tried in a manner which he hitherto had not experienced. Auxentius moved, that a party of soldiers might be sent to secure for himself the possession of the church called Basilica: and tribunes came to demand it, with the plate and vessels belonging to it. At the same time, there were those

* Theodoret, b. v. c. 13.

† Epistle of Ambrose, 30.

who represented, that it was an unreasonable thing, that the emperor should not be allowed to have one place of worship which was agreeable to his conscience. The language was specious, but deceitful. Justina and her son, if they had thought it prudent to exert their authority, might have commanded the use not of one only, but of all the churches: but the demand of the court was, that Ambrose should do what in conscience he could not, that he should, by his own deed, resign the church into Arian hands, which, as circumstances then stood, would have been to acknowledge, indirectly at least, the Arian creed. He therefore calmly answered the officers, that if the emperor had sent to demand his house or land, money or goods, he would have freely resigned them, but that he could not deliver that which was committed to his care. In the congregation he that day told the people,* that would not willingly desert his right; that if compelled, he knew not how to resist. 'I can grieve,' says he, 'I can weep, I can groan. Against arms and soldiers, tears are my arms. Such are the fortifications of a pastor. I neither can nor ought to resist in any other manner. Our Lord Jesus is Almighty; what he commands to be done shall be fulfilled, nor does it become you to resist the divine sentence.' It seemed proper to state in his own words what his conduct was; and it appears, that he abated nothing of the maxims of passive submission to the civil power, which Christians had ever practised from the days of St. Paul, and that there is not the least ground to accuse Ambrose of disloyalty to his prince. He had served him already faithfully, and we shall see presently that he is again ready to expose himself to danger for his service. The court knew his

* Orat. in Auseen, p. 159. Paris edition.

principles, and seem not to have had the least fear that he should draw the people into a rebellion; but they wished to menace him into a degree of compliance with Arianism.

Ambrose during the suspension of this affair employed the people in singing divine hymns and psalms, at the end of which there was a solemn doxology to the honour of the Trinity. The method of responsive singing had been gradually practised in the East, and was introduced by Ambrose into Milan, whence it was propagated into all the churches. The people were much delighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed, and one of the best judges in the world, who then lived at Milan, owns that his own soul was melted into divine affection on these occasions.*

The demands of the court were now increased: not only the Portian church which stood without the walls, but also the great church newly built within the city, were required to be given up. On the Lord's day after sermon, the catechumens being dismissed, Ambrose went to baptize those who were prepared for that ordinance, when he was told that officers were sent from the court to the Portian church; he went on, however, unmoved in the service, till he was told, that the people having met with Castulus an Arian presbyter in the street, had laid hands on him. Then with prayers and tears he besought God, that no man's blood might be shed, but rather his own, not only for the pious people, but also for the wicked. And he immediately sent some presbyters and deacons, who recovered Castulus safe from the tumult. The court enraged sent out warrants for apprehending several merchants and tradesmen; men were put in chains, and vast

* Aug. Conf. b. 9.

sums of money were required to be paid in a little time, which many professed they would pay cheerfully, if they were suffered to enjoy the profession of their faith unmolested. By this time the prisons were full of tradesmen, and the magistrates and men of rank were severely threatened; while the courtiers urged Ambrose with the imperial authority; whom he answered with the same loyalty and firmness as before. The Holy Spirit, said he, in his exhortation to the people, has spoken in you this day, to this effect: *Emperor, we entreat, but we do not fight.* The Arians, having few friends among the people, kept themselves within doors. A notary coming to the bishop from the emperor, asked him, whether he intended to usurp the empire? 'I have an empire,' says he, 'it is true, but it lies in weakness, according to that saying of the apostle, *when I am weak, then am I strong.* Even Maximus will clear me of this charge, since he will confess, it was through my embassy he was kept from the invasion of Italy.' Wearied and overcome at length with his resolution, the court, who meant to obtain his consent, rather than to exercise violence, ordered the guards to leave the church, where the bishop had lodged all night; the soldiers having guarded it so close, that none had been suffered to go out; and the people confined there having spent their time in singing psalms. The sums exacted of the tradesmen also were restored. Peace was made for the present, though Ambrose had still reason to fear for himself, and expressed his desire, in the epistle which he wrote to his sister Marcellina, that God would defend his church, and let its enemies rather satiate their rage with his blood.*

Maximus, threatening to invade Italy, threw the court

* Epis. 33.

into the greatest alarm. Now the resort was Ambrose. He undertook an embassy for them cheerfully, and executed it with great fortitude; but it was only by the coming of Theodosius that the progress of the usurper was checked and himself slain.

Valentinian after this embraced the truth, at least in form. He was certainly reconciled to Ambrose, and loved him highly, is certain: and in the year 392, in which he lost his life by a second usurpation in the West, he sent for Ambrose to come to baptize him. The bishop in his journey heard of his death, with which he was deeply affected.

The faithfulness of Ambrose was manifest in a remarkable manner in his conduct to the emperor Theodosius.

At Thessalonica a tumult was made by the populace, and the emperor's officer was murdered. The news was calculated to try the temper of Theodosius, who ordered the sword to be let loose upon them. Ambrose interceded, and the emperor promised to forgive. But the great officers of the court persuaded him to retract, and to sign a warrant for military execution. It was executed with great cruelty. Seven thousand were massacred in three hours, without trial, and without distinction.

Ambrose* wrote him a faithful letter, reminding him of the charge in the prophecy, that if the priest does not warn the wicked he shall be answerable for it.† ‘You discover a zeal,’ says he, ‘for the faith and fear of God, I own: but your temper is warm, soon to be appeased indeed, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not regulated, it bears down all before it.’ He urges the example of David, and shows the impropriety of communicating

* Amb. Epis. 51.

† Ezek. iii. 18.

with him at present. 'I love you,' says he, 'I cherish you, I pray for you; but blame not me, if I give the preference to God.' On these principles Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius into the church of Milan. The emperor pleaded the case of David. 'Imitate him,' says the zealous bishop, 'in his repentance, as well as in his sin.' Theodosius submitted, and kept from the church eight months. On the feast of the nativity, he expressed his sorrow with sighs and tears in the presence of Ruffinus the master of the Offices.* 'I weep,' said he, 'that the temple of God, and consequently heaven, is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars.' Ruffinus undertook to persuade the bishop to admit the emperor! Ambrose urged the impropriety of his rude interference, because Ruffinus, by his evil counsels, had been the author of the massacre. Ruffinus telling him, that the emperor was coming, 'I will hinder him,' says he, 'from entering the vestibule; yet if he will play the king, I shall offer him my throat.' Ruffinus returning, informed the emperor; 'I will go, and receive the refusal which I desire,' says he. And as he approached the bishop, he added, I come to offer myself, to submit to what you prescribe. Ambrose enjoined him to do public penance, and to suspend the execution of capital warrants for thirty days in future, in order that the ill effects of intemperate anger might be prevented. The emperor pulling off his imperial robes, prayed prostrate on the pavement, nor did he put on those robes, till the time of his penance was expired. 'My soul cleaveth to the dust,' said he, 'quicken thou me, according to thy word.' The people prayed and wept with him, and he not only complied with the rules of penance, but retained visible marks of compunction and sadness during the rest of his life.

* Theodoret, b. 5. c. 18.

Theodosius becoming sole master of the Roman world, extirpated idolatry every where. At Alexandria in Egypt, the pagans murdered a number of Christians. The emperor pardoned the murderers, but ordered their temples to be destroyed. There was a remarkable image of Serapis in the temple, of which it had been confidently given out, that if any man touched it, the earth would open, the heaven be dissolved, and all things run back into a general chaos. A soldier, however, animated by Theophilus the bishop, was so hardy as to make the experiment. With an axe he cleft him down the jaws; an army of mice fled out at the breach he had made; and Serapis was hacked in pieces. On the destruction of idolatry in Egypt, it happened that the Nile did not overflow so plentifully, as it had been wont to do. It is, said the Pagans, because it is affronted at the prevailing impiety; it has not been worshipped with sacrifice,* as it is used to be. Theodosius, being informed of this, declared, like a man who believed in God, and preferred heavenly things to earthly; 'We ought to prefer our duty to God to the streams of the Nile, and the cause of piety to the fertility of the country; let the Nile never flow again, rather than idolatry be encouraged.' The event afforded a fine comment on our Saviour's words, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you.' The Nile returned to its course, and rose above the highest mark, which, at other times, it seldom reached.

Theodosius died in 395, leaving Christianity established throughout the empire.

Ambrose died in 397, admired, regretted, and lamented by the whole Christian world. His life not im-

* Sozom, b. vii. c. 20.

probably had been shortened by the incessant activity of his mind, and by the multiplicity of his employments; for he was only fifty-seven years old, and had been appointed bishop of Milan at the age of thirty-four.

His spirit was remarkably kind and sympathetic; his benevolence was extended to all, but especially those of the household of faith. His estate, real and personal, he bestowed on the poor, and for the support of the church, styling the poor his stewards and treasurers.* His labours were immense: he administered the eucharist daily, and preached commonly on the Lord's day, frequently on extraordinary occasions, and spent much time in teaching catechumens. His temper was heroic and strong; and no dignity or authority could shelter offenders from his episcopal rebukes, where he deemed it his duty to reprehend. Augustine tells us, that he found it, in a manner, impossible to have access to him, because of the multiplicity of his employments. The time he could spare from pastoral and charitable engagements was devoted to study and meditation."

He said to his clergy, "Why do you not employ the time which is free from clerical employments in reading? Why do you not revisit Christ, speak to Christ, hear Christ? We speak to him, when we pray; we hear him, when we read the divine oracles."

A friend of his, desirous to be admitted as a clergyman into his bishopric, he refused because his gestures were light and indecent. To another, already a clergyman, he excepted because of his indecent levity in his conduct. His judgment was verified in both. The former, during the Arian persecution at Milan, deserted the faith; the latter, through the love of gain, denied himself to be

* Orat in Aux.

a priest of Ambrose's diocese, to avoid judicial penalties.

Thus humbly does he speak of himself: "How shall I hear thee say to me, He has loved much, and is forgiven much? I confess my debts were greater than those of the penitent woman, and more was forgiven me, who was called into the ministry from the noise of the forum, and the terror of judicial administration. Yet, if we cannot equal her, the Lord Jesus knows how to support the weak, and to bring with himself the fountain of living water. He came to the grave himself. Oh that thou wouldest come to this my sepulchre of corruption, Lord Jesus, and wash me with thy tears. If thou weep for me, I shall be saved. Thou shalt call me from the grave of this body, and say, come forth, that my thoughts may go forth to Christ and call forth thy servant. Though, bound with the chains of my sins, I am entangled hand and foot, and buried in dead works, on thy call I shall come forth free, and be found one of those who sit at thy table. It shall be said, behold a man, taken from the midst of secular vanity, remains in the priesthood not by his own strength, but by the grace of Christ. Preserve, Lord, thy own gift. I know myself unworthy of the episcopal office, because I had given myself to this world, but, by thy grace, I am what I am. The least of all bishops: yet because I have undertaken some labour for thy church, preserve this fruit, lest whom thou callest to the ministry, when lost, thou shouldest suffer to perish in that ministry: And particularly, granting me the spirit of sympathizing with sinners; that I may not proudly chide, but mourn and weep; that while I deplore another, I may mourn over myself, saying, Tamar is more righteous than I.* Perhaps a young person may have sinned,

* Gen. xxxviii.

deceived and hurried on into folly; we old persons sin also. The law of the flesh rebels against the law of our mind, even in us, whose duty it is to teach. Tamar is more righteous than I. We blame the avarice of another; let us remember whether our conduct has been stained with the same vice, which secretly dwells in our corrupt nature, and let each say, Tamar is more righteous than I. The same may be said with respect to the vice of anger. This is the way to avoid the severity of that just rebuke of our Lord concerning the mote and the beam.—He who rejoices in another's fall, rejoices in the devil's victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear that a man perishes for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice: God wants not our money, but our faith."

That in some degree he was tinctured with superstition is occasionally manifest, but he was deeply pious. "I wish," says he, "a cautious and earnest affection for the things of God were as easy to be attained, as it is easy to speak of it. But the enticement of earthly lusts frequently creeps in, and the diffusion of vanity fills the mind. To avoid these snares is difficult, to be divested of them impossible. In fine, that the thing is rather matter of desire than effect, the prophet confesses, in saying, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' Our heart is not in our own power; our thoughts by sudden incursions confound the mind, and draw it a different way from what we have determined.—Who so happy as always to mount upwards in his heart? How can this be done without divine aid? Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."*

He who feels so strongly the power of that sin which

* Ps. 84. Ambrose de Fuga Seculi, C. 1.

dwelleth in us,* needs the light of grace to conduct him. Nor was it wanting in Ambrose. In that age of declension, not of apostacy from the faith, the candlestick of Milan was possessed of as clear and steady a light, under the ministration of her angel,† as any at that time in the Christian world. Hear his summary view of the Gospel-salvation: “God therefore assumed flesh, that he might abolish the curse of sinful flesh, and was made a curse for us, that the blessing might swallow up the curse; and that righteousness, pardon, and life, might swallow up our sin, our condemnation, and our death. For he underwent death, that the sentence might be fulfilled.—Nothing is done in the Gospel against the sentence of God, since the condition of the divine sentence has been fulfilled.—We are dead with Christ: why then do we seek any more the acts of this life? For we carry about us the death of Christ, that the life of Christ may also be manifested in us. We live therefore now, not our own life, but the life of Christ, of all virtues. We are risen with Christ, let us live in him, let us rise in him, that the serpent may not be able to find in earthly things our heel, which he may wound.”

An epistolary address to clergymen deserves to be read by persons of this order in all ages. “It is,” says he, “a common temptation to the human mind, that persons meeting with some slight offence in the path of duty, are inclined to depart from it. In a clergyman such conduct is peculiarly lamentable. Satan labours by this method, if he can by no other, to offend them. What advantage is it to me to remain in the pastoral office, to be laboriously employed, and ill-treated, as if I had no other way of getting my bread? What, are worldly ends the go-

* Rom. vii. 17.

† Rev. i. 20, “the angels of the seven churches.”

verning motive, and do you not mean to lay up in store for the world to come?—Say not of thy God, he is a hard master; say not of thy office, it is unprofitable. The devil envies thy hope. Depart not from the Lord's inheritance, that he may at length bid thee enter into his joy. Farewell, my sons, and serve the Lord; for he is a good master."

The goodness of the great Head of the Church, in raising up and qualifying such eminent servants, especially in times of peculiar necessity, is abundantly manifest. They exhibit the power of the Gospel, encourage the hearts of the faithful, and confound the enemies of truth. Such men are scattered, like stars of the first magnitude, all along the track of time.

CHAPTER IX.

Ephraim.—Basil, &c.

AMBROSE was not the only one who shone in the latter part of the fourth century.

Among these Ephraims, the Syrians exhibited the Gospel both in spirit and conduct. A famine raging in Edessa, and the indigent dying for want, he went among the rich, and reproved vehemently. They excused themselves on account of the difficulty of finding a proper person, whose discretion and fidelity might be trusted in the distribution of their alms. Do you think me competent to this office? replied Ephraim. All owned it without hesitation "Then I will undertake it." Receiving their contributions, he caused three hundred beds to be brought into the public cloisters of the city, and the infirm

to be placed on them, and he furnished them both with food and medicine. He took care also of strangers, and of those whom want had driven out of the country, and provided them all with necessary accommodations, till the dearth was abated.

Thus does he speak of himself: "From my childhood I have been a vessel unprofitable and dishonourable. Warning others, I have fallen myself into their evils twofold. Wo is me!—whence can there be any refuge, unless the mercies of God shine quickly upon me. Nor is there any hope of salvation from works: While I speak of purity, I am thinking of uncleanness: While I am uttering rules for the conquest of the passions, my own are inwardly raging night and day. What excuse can I make? Alas! what a scrutiny must I undergo! I have had the form, without the power of godliness, I fear, lest fire from heaven should consume me, as it did the two sons of Aaron. Shall I then despair of salvation? By no means: this the adversary desires, in order to destroy me. I do not throw away myself; for I confide in the mercies of God, and your prayers for me.—I pray thee, cast me not away. Thou knowest the wounds of my soul; heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.—What shame will seize me, when those, who now count me holy, shall see me condemned, and when all secrets shall be laid open!"*

"Vain," says he, "is every endowment without humility. Pride labours to domineer over all, and lays a snare for every one in that way which is peculiar to each. The wise, the strong, the beautiful, the ingenious, are each exposed to danger from that in which they excel. The Lord, knowing our danger, hath set humility as our guard, saying, 'When ye have done all, say we are un-

* Id. 16.

profitable servants. Do those who labour abundantly in the ministry glory over those of a more still and quiet turn; behold, the Lord commends Mary sitting at his feet, as having chosen the good portion. Are the sedate inclined to glory over the active; behold, the Son of man came to minister.—To be lifted up, is to have a fleshly mind; and if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.—When thou canst bear grievous things, against thy will, yet willingly, know that thou hast made proficiency in humility.—Through pride, the Pharisee was condemned; through humility, the Publican was exalted; with whom may the Lord deign to rank us in his kingdom with all the just”*

Who would not love such a master, worship him, and confess his goodness?—From his immense height and the blessed bosom of the Father did he not descend to us? The invisible became visible—O wonder, full of fear and trembling! A hand of clay, formed of the dust, smote the Creator of Heaven and earth; and we poor dust and ashes, cannot bear the contradiction of a word—What wilt thou say to him in that day?”†

Speaking of the day of judgment, he says, “An innumerable multitude, each raised from the dead, and clothed with his own body, exclaim, ‘Glory to him who hath raised us and gathered us together by his loving kindness.’ Blessed is he, who shall be counted worthy to see that hour in which all that loved the immortal Bridegroom are taken up into the clouds to meet him.—I remembered the day, and trembled, and, groaning, wept till I had no more power to weep.—My days have passed on, and my iniquities have been multiplied. Wo is me my beloved! What shall I do in the shame of that hour, when my friends, who now see and bless me in this garb of piety,

* Id.

† Aγ.

may behold me full of iniquity within?—O gracious Lover of souls! by thy compassions I conjure thee, place me not at the left hand with the goats; but by thy kindness, I implore thee, give me a contrite spirit, and purify me, that I may be a temple of thy grace. Sinner as I am, I knock at thy door without ceasing; slothful though I be, yet I walk in thy way.”

Speaking of those who would search out the nature of the Son of God, he says, “Unhappy, miserable, and most impudent is he, who desires to search out his Maker. Innumerable myriads of angels glorify with reverence, and trembling adore, while men of clay, full of sins, dispute without fear, concerning the Divinity.”

Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, was another shining light; as was also Basil of Cæsarea. The latter, finding that discipline had been neglected in his church, set himself to the work of reformation.

Officers, who were a disgrace to religion, ministered in the church, and the subaltern superintendents* ordained men without the knowledge of the bishop, and without any just examination; and many pressed into the ministry for mere secular reasons: it was reported, that some were even guilty of selling the priesthood for money, the crime usually known by the name of Simony. Basil reminded his clergy of the strictness of the primitive discipline, and of the care formerly exercised by the presbyters and deacons in examining the lives and manners of the persons to be ordained; and he made earnest attempts to revive the laudable customs, inveighing against simony as most detestable.

Gregory Nazianzen, bishop of Constantinople, at the time of the famous council there, was distinguished for

* Chorepiscopi. A sort of under-bishops in great dioceses.

his eloquence, and endowed the gospel by his virtues, but he was not qualified to stand before his enemies.

Moses, bishop of the Saracens, and Ulfilas, "the apostle of the Goths," laboured successfully in the propagation of the Gospel.

• Fifth Century.

CHAPTER I.

Chrysostom.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM was, at the opening of the fifth century, bishop of Constantinople, where Arcadius, the son of Theodosius, reigned emperor of the East. Of the eloquence of this renowned disciple we may form some idea, when we are told that the great Libanius of Antioch, with whom he studied oratory, being one day asked who would be capable of succeeding him, answered, "John, if the Christians had not stolen him from us."

Diodorus, afterwards bishop of Tarsus, led him to forsake the popular whims of Origen, and to investigate the literal and historical sense of the divine word; a practice in which he differed from most of the fathers of his times.

Flavian, bishop of Antioch, promoted him to the office of presbyter in his diocese. It was in the year 398 that he was made bishop of Constantinople. He began immediately to attempt the reformation of his diocese. He put an end to a custom of the clergy of keeping matrons in their families, which caused much scandal; he censured their covetousness and their luxury; retrenched the expenses of the bishop's table, and applied the surplus to

the needy; built a large hospital* for the infirm, and put it under the most salutary regulations. Such ministers as refused to amend their lives, he suspended from their offices; and the widows who were maintained by the church, were admonished to abstain from their gay manner of living, or else to marry. And he pressed the laity, whose employments filled up the day, to attend divine worship in the evening.

The common people heard him gladly, as, for a time at least, they generally will hear, in all ages, a preacher who speaks to the conscience, though severely, yet faithfully, with an earnest desire exhibited in his whole manner to do them good. Even some of the Dissenters attended on his preaching; nor did he labour in vain in reclaiming heretics.† The clergy, indolent and corrupt as they then were, opposed him vehemently, and watched opportunities against him. The wealthy and the great,

* The superiority of Christianity, considered in an ethical and political point of view, to all other religions, may deserve to be an object of attention. We have seen great proofs of it already. It is difficult to prove a negative proposition; I can only say, therefore, that I do not recollect any such humane and beneficent provisions for the poor in the whole circle of ancient Paganism; nor do I remember any one of the philosophers, who was ever sedulously employed, by word or deed, for the lower ranks of men. True religion visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. With justice might Ambrose, observing the liberality which the church exercised to the needy, ask the Pagans, Let them tell me, what captives were redeemed, what hospitals maintained, what exiles provided for, by the income of the temples?

† A visible reformation of manners in a capital, which had long suffered under Arian impiety, and had fallen into a general relaxation of discipline, attended his labours. Persons, who hitherto had frequented the public shows, now came in crowds to public worship. Here he expounded various parts of the New Testament. He preached three times a week, and sometimes seven days successively. The crowd was so great, that to place himself where he might be heard, he was obliged to sit in the middle of the church in the reader's desk. He reformed likewise the churches of the neighbouring provinces of Thrace, Asia, and Pontus. It appears that various churches in the East were administered with shameful corruption and profligacy, and several bishops, by the vigour of Chrysostom's zeal, were deposed.

offended at his plain reproofs, were as ill disposed as the clergy. Chrysostom however persevered; nor did he confine his cares to Constantinople. In order to overcome the Arianism of the Goths, he ordained some persons of their country, to whom he assigned a church within the city, and by their industry he reclaimed many. He himself often preached there, and prevailed on others of the clergy to do the same. He made liberal and active attempts to spread the Gospel among barbarous nations, though the troubles, which afterwards befel him, must have checked both these and other Christian designs.*

Such however had been the relaxation of discipline, and such the readiness with which persons had been admitted to the Lord's supper, that his faithfulness brought upon him persecution.

A synod at length, held and managed by Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, his determined enemy, and one of the worst ecclesiastical characters in history, supported by the influence of the proud Eudoxia, the empress, condemned him with extreme injustice.

Chrysostom, foreseeing the effect of the storm which was gathering around him, addressed himself to the bishops, who were his friends, assembled in the great room of his house.† “Brethren, be earnest in prayer; and as you love our Lord Jesus, let none of you for my sake desert his charge. For, as was St. Paul's case, I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I see I must undergo many hardships, and then quit this troublesome life. I know the subtilty of Satan, who cannot bear to be daily tormented with my preaching. By your constancy you will find mercy at the

* Fleury, B. XX, 40. Sozom. B. VIII, c. 5.

† Cave's Life of Chrysostom, Pallad. vita Chrysost. p. 67.

hand of God: only remember me in your prayers." The assembly being afflicted with vehement sorrow, he besought them to moderate their grief; "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I always told you this life is a road in which joys and sorrows both pass swiftly away. The visible scene of things before us is like a fair, where we buy and sell, and sometimes recreate ourselves. Are we better than the patriarchs? Do we excel the prophets and apostles, that we should live here forever?" When one of the company passionately bewailed the desolations of the church, the bishop, striking the end of his right fore-finger on the palm of his left hand (which he was accustomed to do, when much in earnest) said, "Brother, it is enough, pursue the subject no further; however, as I requested, desert not your churches. As for the doctrine of Christ, it began not with me, nor shall it die with me. Did not Moses die? and did not Joshua succeed him?—Paul was beheaded, and left he not Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and many more behind him?"

Eulysius, bishop of Apamea, answered, "But if we keep our churches, we shall be compelled to communicate and subscribe." "Communicate," returns he "you may, that you make not a schism in the church,* but subscribe not

* In this he doubtless acted with great propriety. Corrupt as the Eastern church then was, the corruption was rather in practice than in doctrine. And such a separation, as afterwards took place at the Reformation, would have been very unjustifiable. Good men, by remaining in it, might do a thousand times more good, than they would be capable of doing by deserting it. And so long as the doctrine itself is preserved sound and pure, by the continuance of holy men in the church, who in that case can remain with a clear conscience, revivals may be expected from time to time. Of this we shall shortly see a solid instance in the Western church, and such we have seen in the church of England in our own times. Separation seems only justifiable in the case of a total corruption and incurable malady, such as that at the time of the Reformation. Hasty and intemperate schisms rend the church into miserable fragments, pre-

the decrees; for I am not conscious of having done any thing, for which I should deserve to be deposed."

As Theophilus assumed a power, which doubtless belonged not to him, and as Chrysostom observed, it did not become a man that lives in Egypt to judge one that lives in Thrace, the bishop of Constantinople refused to own the authority of the court. His enemies deposed him for contumacy, and to support their views, they informed the emperor Arcadius, that he had been guilty of treason, meaning the affront he had put on the empress in calling her Jezebel; and it is not improbable, but that he had, in some of his sermons, compared her to the wife of Ahab, whom, in truth, she much resembled in pride and cruelty.

The people of Constantinople, however, who sincerely loved the bishop, insisted on his being heard by more equitable judges, and so strong was their agitation, that Chrysostom, fearing a popular insurrection, delivered himself up secretly to the officer, who came to execute the imperial warrant against him. He was conveyed immediately to a port in the Black Sea. As soon as it was known that he was gone, the whole city was in an uproar; many blamed the emperor, who, in so weak a manner, had given up the most upright of men to the malice of his wife and of Theophilus. The tumult was at length so violent, that Eudoxia herself, frightened at the danger, pressed her husband to recal him, and even wrote to Chrysostom a letter full of protestations of sorrow and respect. Chrysostom was, therefore, restored to his bishopric. But the calm season lasted not long. A silver

vent as far as man can prevent, any great and general revival of godliness, and are strongly guarded against in the epistolary writings of the New Testament.

statue of the empress was solemnly erected in the street just before the great church of St. Sophia. It was dedicated with many heathenish extravagancies; and the people used to meet there in sports and pastimes, to the distraction of the congregation. The bishop, impatient of these things, blamed them from the pulpit, and with great imprudence began his sermon after this manner: "Now again Herodias raves and is vexed, again she dances, again she desires John's head in a charger."³*

The enemies of the bishop could not desire a greater advantage. And they improved it to the utmost. Numbers were ready to gratify the resentment of Eudoxia. And Arcadius, overcome by importunity, again ordered his deposition. He was suspended and confined: His friends and followers were dispersed, rifled, killed, or imprisoned. Edicts were issued, severely threatening all that refused to renounce communion with Chrysostom. It was the season of Easter, when the catechumens, who had been instructed, were to receive baptism. The friends of Chrysostom fled into the fields to keep the festival there. The emperor himself went out that day into a meadow adjoining to the city, and espied a field covered with white. These were the catechumens, who had been baptized the night before, and had then their white garments upon them, being near three thousand in number. The emperor, being told that they were a conventicle of heretics, ordered a party of soldiers to disperse them. Several women of quality were very rudely treated on this occasion, and numbers were imprisoned

* The rashness of Chrysostom in this affair was so great, that I could not easily believe this account. But I see the truth of the story is confirmed by the authority both of Socrates and Sozomen, and on consulting them it does not appear that any apology can be made for the bishop. He certainly mixed not the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

and scourged. Receiving at length a warrant, signed by the emperor, to depart, Chrysostom exhorted the deaconesses to continue their care of the church, and to communicate with the bishop, who should be chosen, by common consent, in his room,* and he retired once more from his see, in the year 404.

Arsacius, brother of Nectarius, being appointed bishop in his stead, the friends of Chrysostom, in opposition to the advice which he had given them, refused to submit, and formed separate assemblies, and were severely persecuted by the name of Joannites. Among these friends was an opulent lady, called Olympias, who had honoured him abundantly, and appears to have profited much by his ministry. She had acted in the church as a deaconess, and was now banished to Nicomedia, whence she supplied the exiled prelate with money. Here she lived many years, an example of piety.

Chrysostom himself was conveyed to Cucusus in Armenia, a barren cold region, infested with robbery, and mournfully marked already with the murder of Paul, the former bishop of Constantinople. His journey to this place was attended with many grievous hardships, though sweetened with the compassionate care of various persons, who keenly sympathized with injured innocence. At Cucusus, however, he met with very generous treatment. Here he preached frequently to a people who heard him gladly. A grievous famine raging in those parts, he was enabled, by the liberality of Olympias, to relieve the poor. And he redeemed many captives which had been taken by the Isaurian robbers. He had formerly conceived a plan for converting the Pagans which were still in Phœ-

* Hence it is evident, that the appearance of a popular election of bishops was still kept up at Constantinople; but it could only be the appearance.

nicia, and had made some progress in it. But understanding that the design had met with a check, he again made vigorous attempts for the support of so good a work, and ordered sums of money for the erection of churches, and the support of missionaries. He seemed to recover his health for a time, but winter approaching he felt the usual effects of that season on persons of weak constitutions. His stomach had unhappily received much injury from the austerities of his youth, and never recovered its tone. The next spring he recruited, but was always obliged to observe the strictest regimen.*

At Constantinople, Atticus was chosen to succeed Arsacius, who died in the year 405, and the Joannites were still persecuted in the Eastern church. Chrysostom himself was obliged to move from place to place on account of danger from robbers, and, as he wrote to Innocent, bishop of Rome, who sincerely, though unsuccessfully, laboured in his cause, he was, in the third year of his banishment, exposed to famine, pestilence, war, continual sieges, an incredible desolation, to death every day, and to the Isaurian swords.

His enemies, beholding with an evil eye the respect every where paid to him, procured an order for him to be removed to Pityus, the very shore of the Black Sea. In his way thither, he was brought to an Oratory of Basiliscus, who had suffered martyrdom under Dioclesian's

* This great imbecility was one reason why he had always dined alone, when bishop of Constantinople. It is well known, that to persons of his weak habit, the attendance at feasts and entertainments is one of the severest punishments. Chrysostom had still more weighty reasons for his recluseness; the sumptuousness of Constantinople was in a manner proverbial, and he thought it his duty to check it. If any thing can add to the wickedness of those accusations which drove him from his see, it is, that he was charged with pride for dining in solitude. Yet he had been very hospitable to the poor, and was an uncommon pattern of beneficence and liberality.

persecution. Here he desired to rest, but his guards, who had all along treated him with brutish ferocity, refused him the indulgence. Nature was however exhausted; he had not gone four miles, before he was so extremely ill, that they were obliged to return with him. Here he received the Lord's supper, made his last prayer before them all, and having concluded with his usual doxology, "glory be to God for all events," he breathed out his soul, in the fifty-third year of his age, in the year 407. The Joannites continued their separate assemblies, till the year 438, when Proclus, then entering on the see, put an end to the schism, by making a panegyric on Chrysostom's memory, and procuring an order from the emperor Theodosius II. the son of Arcadius, that his body should be brought back to Constantinople with great funeral solemnity. He, who in his life time, had met with so many enemies, was now universally esteemed and admired, and Theodosius himself sincerely bewailed the injury done to so excellent a personage by his parents.

This great man, however, *though dead, yet speaks* by his works. He laboured much in expounding the Scriptures, and though not copious in the exhibition of evangelical truth, still he every where shows that he loved it.* On those words of the Apostle, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, he says, "What a saying!—what mind can comprehend it? He made a just person a sinner, that he might make sinners just. But the Apostle's language is still stronger: He doth not say, he made him a sinner, but sin,—that we might be made, not righteous, but righteousness, even the righteousness of God. For it is of God, since not of works (which

* Hom. 2, on 2d Epis. to Cor. chap. v.

would require spotless perfection) but by grace we are justified, where all sin is blotted out." Here is a plain testimony to the Christian doctrine of justification, and under this shelter, this holy man, no doubt found rest for his own soul.

He calls the stage an academy of incontinence. "What harm, say you, is there in going to a play? Is that sufficient to keep one from the communion? I ask you, can there be a more shameless sin, than to come to the holy table defiled with adultery? Hear the words of him who is to be our judge. Jesus Christ saith, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. What can be said of those, who passionately spend whole days in those places, in looking on women of ill fame; with what face will they pretend to say, they did not behold them to lust after them.—They see women adorned on purpose to inspire lust. If, in the church itself, where Psalms are sung, the Scripture is read, and the fear of the Almighty appears, lust will creep in like a thief, how shall the frequenters of the stage* overcome the motions of concupiscence?"

* Balls and public meetings of entertainment are as much the objects of his indignation as plays. Games of chance also he represents as the occasions of blasphemies, losses, anger, quarrels, and all manner of crimes. Du Pin. Chrysostom.

The truth is, men who really fear God, in all ages have been united against these things; and for this reason, which is felt by them, though not by others, namely, that they have too serious a conflict with indwelling sin, to give themselves up to external incitements of evil.

CHAPTER II.

Augustine.

AUGUSTINE, bishop of Hippo, was a Numidian. His mother Nomica, who was renowned for her piety, ceased not to follow her son with her fervent prayers, until the period of his conversion, which took place when he was about thirty years of age. Before that period he was adorned with all that talent and culture could bestow. He was a philosopher, a professor of rhetoric, but he was a stranger to virtue and to peace. The following short extracts from his confessions show his views of himself.

The imbecility of my infant limbs was innocent, not so the spirit of the infant. I have seen and observed an infant full of envy; pale with anger, he looked at his fellow-suckling with bitterness in his countenance. Since I was conceived in iniquity, and my mother nourished me in her womb in sin, where, Lord, where, or when was I innocent?

O thou light of my heart, and bread of my inward man, and true husband of my soul! I loved thee not. I committed fornication against thee, and (such is the spirit of the world,) I was applauded with "well done" on all sides, and I should have been ashamed to have been found otherwise disposed. Yet the friendship of the world is fornication against thee. This is the kind of literature, which has arrogated to itself the name of polite and liberal. Learning of real utility is looked on as low and vul-

Nomica

gar. Thus, in my childhood, did I sin by a vicious preference.

A man shall seek the fame of eloquence, while, before the crowded audience, he guards against the least false pronunciation, and guards not at all against the fiercest malevolence of his own heart, raging against his fellow-creatures.

In this school did I wretchedly live. To please men was then to me the height of virtue, whilst I saw not the whirlpool of baseness in which I was cast from thine eyes. For what more filthy than I, all this time, deceiving by innumerable falsehoods both masters and parents, through the love of play and amusements? I even robbed the storehouses of my parents, either from the spirit of gluttony, or to bestow things agreeable to my play-fellows. In my plays, I often sought to obtain fraudulent victories, overcome by the desire of vain excellence. Yet, what should I dread so much to suffer, or be so ready to accuse in another, if detected, as that very thing which I did to others; in which, however, if I myself was detected, I was more disposed to rage than to submit. Is this puerile innocence? far from it, O Lord. Change the scene only from pedagogues and masters, from nuts and balls, and sparrows, to prefects, kings, gold and estates, and we see the vices of men, just as the heavier punishments succeed to ferulas.

I came to Carthage surrounded and agitated with flagitious lusts. After thee, O my God, the true bread of life, I hungered not; and though famished with real indigence, and longing after that which satisfieth not, I had no desire for incorruptible food, not because I was full of it, for the more empty I was, the more fastidious I grew.

The spectacles of the theatre, in particular, now hurried me away, full of the images of my miseries, and the fomentations of my fire.

The arts of the Forum also engaged my ambition; the more fraudulent, the more laudable.

I suddenly gave up the fantastic hope of reputation by eloquence, and felt a most ardent thirst after wisdom. In the mean time, I was maintained at Carthage at my mother's expense, being in the nineteenth year of my age, my father having died two years before. How did I long, my God, to fly from earthly things to thee, and yet I knew not what thou wert doing with me.

I determined therefore to apply my mind to the Holy Scriptures, to see what they were; and I now see the whole subject was impenetrable to the proud, low in appearance, sublime in operation, and veiled with mysteries; and my frame of heart was such as to exclude me from it, nor could I stoop to take its yoke upon me. I had not these sensations when I attended to the Scriptures, but they appeared to me unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Cicero. My pride was disgusted with their manner, and my penetration could not enter into their meaning.* It is true, those who are content to be little children, find by degrees an illumination of their souls; but I disdained to be a child, and elated with pride, imagined myself to be possessed of manly wisdom.

In this situation I fell in with the Manichees, men, who had in their mouths the mere sound of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and were always talking of *the truth, the truth*, and yet formed the most absurd opinions of the

* An excellent description of the usual effect of a little Scriptural study on a proud mind, which, by the just judgment of God, is given up to judicial infatuation and specious delusion in some way or other.

works of nature, on which subjects the heathen philosophers far excelled them. O Truth, how eagerly did I pant after thee, while they only used the word with their mouths, or repeated it in many huge volumes! But they taught me to look for my God in the Sun and Moon, and also in a number of splendid phantasms of their own creation.* I endeavoured to feed on these vanities, but they being not my God, though I then supposed so, I was not nourished, but exhausted. How far did I wander then from thee! excluded even *from the husks which the swine did eat!* For the fables of the poets, which I did not believe, though I was entertained with them, were preferable to the absurdities of these lovers of truth. Alas! alas! by what steps was I led into Satanic depths! Panting after truth, I sought thee, my God, not in intellectual, but in carnal speculation, for I would confess all to thee who didst compassionate my misery, even while I was hardened against thee. The Manichees seduced me, partly with their subtle and captious questions concerning the origin of evil, partly with their blasphemies against the Old Testament saints.†

* The Manichees, so called from Manes their founder, had existed about an hundred years. It would not be worth while to notice them at all, were it not for their connexion with the life of Augustine. Like most of the ancient heretics, they abounded in senseless whims, not worthy of any solicitous explanation. This they had in common with the Pagan philosophers, that they supposed the Supreme Being to be material, and to penetrate all nature. Their grand peculiarity was to admit of two independent principles, a good and an evil one, in order to solve the arduous question concerning the origin of evil. Like all heretics, they made a great parade of seeking truth with liberal impartiality, and were thus qualified to deceive unwary spirits, who, far from suspecting their own imbecility of judgment, and regardless of the word of God and hearty prayer, have no idea of attaining religious knowledge by any other method than by natural reason.

† The Manichees objected to the characters of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, &c. on account of various actions allowed under the dispensation of their times, but forbidden under the New Testament, and thence formed an argument against the divinity of the Old Testament.

For nine years, while I was rolling in the filth of sin, often attempting to rise, and still sinking deeper, did my mother in vigorous hope persist in incessant prayer. I remember, also, that she entreated a certain bishop to undertake to reason me out of my errors. He was a person not backward to attempt this, where he found a docile subject. "But your son," says he "is too much elated at present, and carried away with the pleasing novelty of his error, to regard any arguments, as appears by the pleasure he takes in puzzling many ignorant persons with his captious questions. Let him alone; only continue praying to the Lord for him; he will in the course of his study discover his error. I myself, perverted by my mother, was once a Manichee, and read almost all their books, and yet at length was convinced of my error, without the help of any disputant." All this satisfied not my anxious parent; with floods of tears she persisted in her request; when at last he, a little out of temper on account of her importunity, said, "Begone, good woman; it is not possible, that the child of such tears should perish."

In the sight of my God I will give an account of the twenty-ninth year of my age. A Manichee bishop, named Faustus, had now come to Carthage, a great snare of the devil, and many were enchanted by his eloquence, which though I could not but commend, I yet distinguished from truth.

I had my doubts concerning the divinity of Manichæism, and in vain proposed them to those of the sect whom I met with. "You must wait, till the all-accomplished Faustus comes to Carthage," was all the answer I received. On his arrival I found him an agreeable speaker, and one who could deliver their dotages in a more

persuasive tone. But by this time I was surfeited with these subjects, and I had been taught by thee, my God, who hast instructed me marvellously, but secretly, that style and manner, however excellent, were not the same thing as sound argument. The address, indeed, the pathos, the propriety of language, and facility of expression in clothing his sentiments, delighted me; but my mind was unsatisfied. The proofs of ignorance in science, which I saw in Manicheism, connected with pretensions to infallibility, staggered my mind with respect to their whole system. On freely conversing with him, I found him possessed of an ingenuous frankness, more valuable than all the subjects of my investigation. He owned his ignorance in all philosophy, and left me convinced of it. Grammar alone, and some Ciceronian and other classical furniture, made up his stock of knowledge, and supplied him with a copiousness of diction, which received additional ornament from his natural vivacity of imagination. My hope of discovering truth was now at an end: I remained still a Manichee, because I despaired of succeeding better on any other plan. Thus that same Faustus, who had been the snare of death to many, was the first who relaxed my fetters, though contrary to his own intention. Thy hands, my God, in the secret of thy providence, forsook not my soul: day and night the prayers of my mother came up before thee, and thou wroughtest upon me in ways marvellous indeed, but secret. Thou didst it, my God: *for man's goings are from the Lord*: and who affords salvation but thy hand, which restores what thou hast made? It was from thy influence, that I was persuaded to go to Rome to teach, instead of Carthage.

I was punished with the scourge of bodily sickness,

and I drew nigh to hell, carrying the load of all my sins, original and actual.

Whither must I have gone, had I at that time departed hence, but to the fire and torments worthy of my deeds, according to the truth of thy appointment!^{†*}

Morning and evening my mother frequented the church, to hear thy word and to pray, and the salvation of her son was the constant burden of her supplications. Thou heardest her, O Lord, and performedst in due season, what thou hadst predestinated. Thou recoveredst me from the fever, that at length I might obtain also a recovery of still greater importance.

From Milan, a requisition was made to Symmachus, prefect of Rome, to send a professor of rhetoric to that city. By the interest of my Manichean friends I obtained the honour, and came to Milan. There I waited on Ambrose the bishop, a man renowned for piety through the world, and who then ministered the bread of life to thy people with much zeal and eloquence. The man of God received me like a father, and I conceived an affection for him, not as a teacher of truth, which I had no idea of discovering in thy church, but as a man kind to me; and I studiously attended his lectures, only with a curious desire of discovering whether fame had done justice to his eloquence or not. I stood indifferent and fastidious with respect to his matter, and at the same time was delighted with the sweetness of his language, more learned indeed, but less soothing and agreeable than that of Faustus. In their thoughts there was no comparison; the latter erred in Manichean fallacies, the former taught

* Does the reader think this harsh? Let him consider whether it can be any thing else than the want of a firm belief of the word of God, and a contempt of his holiness and authority, that can make him think so, and he will do well to apply the awful case to his own conscience.

salvation in the most salutary manner. But salvation is far from sinners, such as I then was, and yet I was gradually approaching to it and knew it not. As I now despaired of finding the way to God, I had no concern with sentiments; language alone I chose to regard. But the ideas which I neglected came into my mind, together with the words with which I was pleased. I gradually was brought to attend to the doctrine of the bishop. I found reason to rebuke myself for the hasty conclusions I had formed of the perfectly indefensible nature of the law and the prophets. A number of difficulties, started upon them by the Manichees, found in the expositions of Ambrose a satisfactory solution.

In conclusion, I determined to remain a catechumen in the church recommended to me by my parents, till I saw my way more clearly.

Ambrose was charmed with the fervor of my mother's piety and the amiableness of her good works, and often brake out in his preaching, when he saw me, congratulating me that I had such a mother, little knowing what sort of a son she had, who doubted of all these things, and even apprehended that the way of life could not be found.

It was out of my power to consult him as I could wish, surrounded as he was with crowds of persons, whose necessities he relieved. During the little time in which he was from them, (and the time was but little) he either refreshed his body with food, or his mind with reading. Hence I had no opportunity to unbosom myself to him. A few words of conversation sufficed not. I expected in vain to find him at leisure for a long conversation.* I

* Doubtless, could the modesty of Augustine have prevailed on him to desire such a conference, he might have obtained it. And what a bishop then was, may be seen in Ambrose.

profited, however, by his sermons. Every Lord's day I heard him instructing the people, and I was more and more convinced of the falsity of the calumnies which those deceivers had invented against the divine books. And when I found, that the Mosaic expression of man made after the image of God, was understood by no believer to imply that God was in human form, though I still could form no idea of a spiritual substance, I was glad, and blushed to think how many years I had falsely accused the church, instead of learning by careful inquiry.*

At length, after a long struggle, he submitted his soul to the empire of the truth, and we find him writing thus: "Whom shall I look to as my mediator? Shall I go to angels? Many have tried this, and have been fond of visions, and have deserved to be the sport of the illusions which they loved. A mediator between God and man must have the nature of both. The true Mediator, whom in thy secret mercy thou hast shown to the humble, and hast sent, that by his example they might also learn humility, the man Christ Jesus, hath appeared a mediator between mortal sinners, and the immortal Holy One, that, because the wages of righteousness is life and peace, by his divine righteousness he might justify the ungodly, and deliver them from death. He was shown to ancient saints, that they might be saved by faith in his future sufferings, as we by faith in the same sufferings already past. How hast thou loved us, Father, delivering up thy only son for us ungodly! For whom he, our priest and sacrifice, who

* A remarkable instance of partiality, attended with a remarkable frankness of confession. Augustine for nine years believed that the general church held the corporeal form of the Supreme Being, though he might with ease have learned the contrary at any time. But heresy in all ages acts in the same disingenuous spirit.

thought it no robbery to be equal with thee, was subjected to death. Well may my hope be strong through such an intercessor; else, I should despair. Many and great are my diseases, thy medicine larger still. Were he not made flesh for us, we could not dream of having any union with him. Terrified with my sins and the weight of my misery, I was desponding, but thou encouragedest me, saying, Christ died for all, that they which live, should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them.* Lo, I cast all my care on thee, Lord, that I may live. Thou knowest my weakness and ignorance, teach and heal me. He hath redeemed me with his blood, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let not the proud calumniate me, if with the poor I desire to eat and be satisfied, and to praise the Lord.”†

Augustine, after his conversion, returned with some friends into Africa, and lived upon his own estate for almost three years, retired from the world. A desire to oblige a person of some consequence in Hippo, who requested his instructions, brought him at length to that city, where Valerius was bishop,—a person of great piety; but, on account of his slender acquaintance with the Latin tongue, scarcely adequate to the office of pastor in that place. Augustine, through the strong and urgent desires of the people, was ordained presbyter to Vale-

* 2 Cor. v.

† Psalm xxii. 26. We see in this last book the author's description of the conflict between flesh and spirit after his conversion, and the repose of his soul for peace and happiness only on the Lord Jesus as his righteousness and strength. I shall make no further remarks than to repeat his own observation in his retractations. “These confessions praise the God of righteousness and goodness, and excite the human understanding and affection toward him. They did this in me while I was writing them, and they do it still when I read them. What others may think of them, let them judge; but I know they have much pleased and do please many of the brethren.”

rius; but wept on the occasion, from the genuine sense which he had of the importance of the office. He told Possidius that his tears were by some misconstrued,* as if he regretted that he had not been chosen bishop. Such poor judges are many of the views and sensations of godly men! Valerius rejoiced that God had heard his prayers, and that the people would now be supplied with such a pastor. He gave him license to preach in the presence of the bishop, a thing before unknown in Africa; but which, from the good effects of this precedent, afterwards grew common. Here his ministry was useful in the instruction and edification of the brethren, and also in the defeat of various heresies. Divine truth, which had been almost buried amidst many schisms and distractions in Africa, now raised up its head again; and Fortunatus, the great leader of the Manichees, was obliged, in confusion, to leave Hippo, when he found himself, by the confession of the hearers, vanquished in a conference with Augustine.

Heretics vied with the members of the general church in their attention to the pastoral labours of Augustine, whose fame began gradually to spread throughout the western world.

CHAPTER III.

Pelagianism.

WHILE the influences of the Spirit were abundant, their existence, instead of being denied, was attributed to a wrong origin: After the progress of error, and the con-

* Possid. Life of Aug.

sequent coldness and indifference to the truth, there were found those bold enough to declare that man was holy in his own nature. The prime assertor of this heresy was Pelagius, a monk, who by his moral life had gained much celebrity. Along with Cœlestius, an Irishman, he traversed various parts of the empire, disseminating his opinions. He talked much about grace, but, like the Arians, he was ambiguous; retaining the term merely to deceive. He used to deliver his views under the modest appearance of queries, started against the doctrines of the church, and those as not invented by himself, but by others. The effect of poisoning the minds of men was, perhaps, more powerfully produced by this, than it would have been by a more direct and positive method. To this he added another artifice: he insinuated himself into the favour of women of some rank, of weak minds, and unacquainted with the spirit of the Gospel, though professing religion; and, by their means, he diffused his tenets with much success. Cœlestius, more open and daring in speech, pursued a method not so replete with deceit, and was therefore exposed to detection more easily than his master.

Pelagius having travelled over the monasteries of Egypt, settled at length at Rome, where his attempts to undermine the whole doctrine of divine grace, by degrees, notwithstanding all his caution, gave umbrage to the church. Unguarded moments also will happen to the most artful, and at times discover them to the most unwary.

Rome being taken by the Goths about the year 410, numbers fled into Africa, and among the rest the two heresiarchs. Pelagius was received at Hippo, in Augustine's absence, where his stay was very short. The bi-

shop of Hippo saw him once or twice at Carthage; but was himself very busy in settling a conference with the Donatists, and nothing material passed between them. Pelagius leaving Africa passed over into Palestine: there his labours attracted the attention of Jerom, who lived a monastic life in the same country, and wrote against his opinions, justly calling on him to speak clearly what he meant, and complaining of his ambiguities.

In the mean time Cœlestius in Africa more openly discovered his sentiments, and made such attempts to propagate them in Carthage itself, that he was summoned to appear before a synod, which was held by Aurelius, bishop of that city. He was accused of denying original sin; and when he was pressed with the custom of the church in baptizing infants, as a proof of her belief in all ages that infants needed redemption, he declared that they had no need of remission, and yet ought to be baptized, that they might be sanctified in Christ. Cœlestius was condemned as an heretic in the year 412, and disappointed of his hopes of rising in the church; for he had either obtained or was about to obtain the office of a presbyter, in Africa.

Like the heresy of modern times, Pelagianism was a mere revival of natural religion or Deism. It was most gratifying to the proud heart of man, because it took away his feeling of dependance upon another for salvation.

Pelagius was condemned, as uttering horrible sentiments, altogether unprecedented in the Christian world.

Driven at length by the voice of the church, and the faithful writings of Augustine, into obscurity, Pelagius went to his native Britain, along with Cœlestius.

Semipelagianism, however, which unites the goodness of man with the grace of God, began its sway.

“That man,” says a writer of those days opposing Pelagius, “That man ejects himself out of grace, who distrusts its fulness, as if man needed the help of God in one part, and did not need it in another part of his actions; as if any moment could be assigned, in which it would not be ruinous to him to be deprived of the Holy Spirit. He, indeed, in the essence of the Deity, is every where, and all comprehensive; but is conceived in a certain manner to recede from those whom he ceases to govern. And the cessation of his aid is to be conceived as his absence, which that man madly thinks to be useful to himself, who rejoices in his good actions, and thinks that he rather than God hath wrought them. The grace of God must therefore be owned in the fullest and most unqualified sense; the first office of which is, that his help be felt.* We have not received, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, whence, if any man think that he has any good things of which God is not the author, but himself, he has not the Spirit of God, but of the world, and swells with that secular wisdom of which it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.—Amidst all the evils of men, to glory in our own intellects, instead of divine illumination, in knowing God, and to be elated in ourselves at the expense of the divine glory, is most dangerous. To desire to be preferred before all, is mischievous; much more so to take a man’s hope from the Lord, and fix it on himself. Is not this to fulfil that Scripture, ‘Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and

* 1 Cor. ii.

whose heart departeth from the Lord?*" It is the very sin of the devil, which ejected him from heaven. And he drew our first parents into the same, causing them to rest in the liberty of their own will.—Men more easily guard against this pride in evil things; in virtues it is most studiously to be repelled, because he to whom praise seems due, is speciously ensnared by the temptation.—Satan, in this respect, has his eye peculiarly on the active, the sober, the chaste, and the virtuous; he would ruin them by the pride of self-sufficiency. Innumerable souls, and the churches in general, have withstood the infection of the new doctrine; but some souls have imbibed the poison. Hence the insidious commendation of human nature, and the defence of its original rectitude as ever preserved unblemished; hence Adam's sin has been asserted to be noxious only by example; hence in fact the abolition of infant baptism; hence the unsound confession of grace, as bestowed according to merit; hence the perfidy of owning, among us, the wounds of original sin, and of declaring, among their own partisans, that Adam hurt us only by example. But while the Lord Jesus says, the whole need not a physician, but the sick, they, though silent, cry aloud in pride, We are whole, we need not a physician.—Consider what is done in regeneration, not looking only at the external sign, but also at the inward grace. Are not vessels of wrath changed into vessels of mercy? Are men born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God? Says not Christ, without me ye can do nothing? Does any man say, that he abides in Christ, who doubts of Christ's working in him?"

"They," says the African council: "They (the Pela-

* Jerem. xvii.

gians) attempt, by their praises of free-will, to leave no room for the grace of God, by which we are Christians, the Lord saying, If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. They assert, that the grace of God consists in this, that he hath so created the nature of man that by his own will he can fulfil the law of God. The law itself too they reckon to belong to grace because God hath given it for a help to men.—But the real grace of God, by which a man is caused to delight in the law after the inward man, they will not acknowledge, though they dare not openly oppose it. Yet, what else do they in effect, while they teach, that human nature is alone sufficient to enable men to obey the law? Not attending to the Scripture, ‘it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;’ and ‘we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as ourselves.’”

CHAPTER IV.

Augustine—His Labours to his Death.

ALARIC, the Goth, having subdued the imperial city, the mouths of the pagans were open to blaspheme God, by saying, the profession of Christianity was the cause. In consequence Augustine wrote an able and elaborate work, entitled “The City of God,” in which he shows the folly and misery of Paganism, and the grandeur of the Gospel. He eloquently describes that felicity which the carnal heart desires, and holds up to view the peace and happiness of the Gospel. He quotes largely from heathen writers, contrasts heathen and Christian virtue, asserts the

superiority of the scriptures, proves the mediation of Christ, and calls upon all to come to the foot of the cross in order that they may be prepared for future judgment. He shows the eternity of the punishments of the wicked, and invites along the way to the New Jerusalem above.

Beside the Pagans and the Pelagians, he attacked and overcame the Manichees, who held two principles, an evil and a good—equally powerful. The Donatists, who still remained, though the cause of their schism had passed away, he also laboured with. Some of these were peaceable men, others were mere banditti who attacked the pastors of the general church, and once waylaid Augustine himself, who would have been killed by them but for the mistake of his guide, who led him in a wrong road. No reason could be given by the better class of Donatists why they should not return to the church, but they persisted in their separation. So easy is it for men to continue in error from mere habit. Augustine strove to keep the arm of the civil law from coming upon this people, but he afterwards surrendered his opinion. Still he frequently interposed to prevent the sentence of fine and banishment from being executed, though such were the outrages of some of the Donatists, it was difficult to shield the more innocent.

Under the charitable and argumentative labours of Augustine, Donatism received a blow, from which it never recovered, and the sect dwindled gradually into insignificance.

He wrote a treatise on faith and works, against Antinomianism, that grand heresy of human nature which is so readily sought to take advantage of the doctrines Paul

preached, and ever strives to find some plausible excuse for iniquity.

He wrote also a treatise on catechising. It appears, that whoever desired to be admitted into the church, was obliged to attend the catechist; and the work, in our author's manner of practising it, was very important. The person, to whom he writes had expressed a concern, because he could not please himself in his manner of speaking. Augustine observes, that this may easily happen, even when there is no particular fault in our manner of exhorting. He owns that it was generally the case with himself. And that the reason is, the mind of a serious preacher or catechist conceiving in one glance a beauty and weight in his subject, to express which his words are too slow or inadequate, he feels ashamed and disappointed; yet, continues Augustine, he ought not to conclude, that his words are lost, or that they appear as mean to the hearers, as they do to himself. "We see," says he, "but in a glass darkly, and we must patiently labour to make greater improvement in divine life. Yet it is desirable to catechise with a cheerful spirit and with sensible comfort in one's own mind. This, however, is the gift of God."

In the method of catechising, he recommends to begin with narration, to give to the pupils a clear and succinct view of the great facts, relative to our religion, both in the Old and New Testament, and to dwell more largely on the more important, and only glance at those which are less so. In the whole manner of doing this, the teacher should have his eyes steadily fixed on the great end, *love*, and refer every thing, which he relates, to the plan of divine love in the gift of Jesus Christ, describing the fall and the redemption, and the method of God in

winning back the apostate spirits of men to love him, in return for his free love to us in Jesus Christ. Yet he observes, that without fear of divine wrath, there can be no motive for sinners to approach to the God of love, or any sufficient inducements to engage their minds to seek him. Nor should the catechist be too shy in conveying his instructions, because the catechumen's motives may be merely worldly. It often happens, says he, through the mercy of God, that he, who applied to us for instruction with carnal views, is brought to feel the value of that, of which at first he only made pretence. But it would be useful, if the catechist could know beforehand what was the frame of the catechumen. If he cannot, he must interrogate him himself, and regulate his discourse by the answers he receives. If the catechumen owns, that fear of Divine wrath for sin, or the terror of some powerful awakening admonition from God, has led him to apply for information, the catechist has then the fairest opening for instruction.

When he has finished his narration, he should add exhortation, laying open the hope of resurrection, and the awful views of divine judgment, of heaven and hell. He should arm the catechumen against the scandals and temptations to which he may be exposed from the perverseness of heretics, the malice of open enemies, or the evil lives of nominal Christians. And he is particularly to be directed, amidst all the precepts given him, how to please God and live a holy life, not to trust in any of his works, but in the grace of God alone.

If the person hath had a liberal education, he must not be offended by a tedious and diffusive view of things respecting the facts of Christianity, though a fuller display of the same facts will be needful for the unlearned.—

The discourse must be varied; it will be necessary in some things to be more large, as in others to be more brief. For instance, in guarding him against the pride of learning, and in forming his taste, he will need to be seriously instructed to avoid faults of a moral rather than those of a literary nature, and to dread the want of grace in his works and deeds, rather than a solecism or barbarism in language, and to take particular care not to despise illiterate Christians.

He hath already hinted at one discouragement with which the catechist is apt to be affected. Another is, that whereas he would rather himself read or hear things useful for his own improvement, he is obliged repeatedly to have recourse to things, which to himself are now no longer necessary. No doubt this is one cause in all ages, why so few love the office of instructing the ignorant. Those who themselves are ignorant, are not fit to instruct, and those who are knowing, are apt to be above the task. A pastor, he observes, is engaged in some agreeable study, and is told that he must proceed to catechise. He is vexed that the course of his work is interrupted, and from the agitation of his mind, is less fitted to discharge the work itself.

Hence he concludes it is necessary, that the teacher should himself learn those things, which may exhilarate his own mind: for God loveth a cheerful giver. He adds, that the meek and charitable example of the Son of God should to this end be placed before him, to shame him out of his pride and impatience; that if indeed we have any more useful study to prosecute, respecting ourselves, we may then expect that God will speak to us in it more powerfully, when we have undertaken cheerfully to speak for him as well as we could to others; and that the tedi-

ousness of that trite and plain road of catechising should be smoothed by divine love in the heart; and that when we consider that we are poor judges of the best order of things, and how much better it is to leave the direction of times and seasons with the all-wise God, we shall not take it amiss, that the providential calls of duty disturbed the order which we had prescribed to ourselves, and that, in short, his will took place before ours.

In interrogating the catechumen, he is to be asked, whether he means to be a Christian for the sake of this life or the next. And one of the most important cautions to be given him is, that he desire to be a Christian solely on account of eternity.

In his treatise on Christian doctrine, he says: "Let our Christian orator, who would be understood and be heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounce any thing. For since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except he who knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can cause us to speak what we ought, and as we ought, unless he in whose hands we and our words are? And, by these means, he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor. At the hour itself of speaking a faithful spirit will think his Lord's words adapted to his circumstances: 'Think not what or how ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' If the Holy Spirit speak in those who are delivered up to persecutors for Christ, why not also in those who deliver Christ to learners? But, on the other side, if any say, that men need to know no rules nor follow

any studies, if the Holy Ghost make men teachers, it might be said also, men need not to pray, because our Lord saith, your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him; and at this rate the rules of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus might be superseded. Prayer and study therefore should go hand in hand; and the two epistles to Timothy and that to Titus are of standing authority in the church, and ought to be deeply meditated upon by every one who undertakes the office of a teacher."

Two anecdotes connected with his own preaching are thus related: While he acted as a presbyter at Hippo, under Valerius his bishop, he was appointed by him to preach to the people, in order to reclaim them from riotous feasting on solemn days. He opened the Scriptures, and read to them the most vehement rebukes. He besought them by the ignominy and sorrow which they brought upon themselves, and by the blood of Christ, not to destroy themselves, to pity him who spake to them with so much affection, and to show some regard to their venerable old bishop, who, out of tenderness to them, had charged him to instruct them in the truth. "I did not make them weep,"* says he, "by first weeping over them, but while I was preaching, their tears prevented mine. Then I own I could not restrain myself. After we had wept together, I began to entertain great hope of their amendment."

He now varied from the discourse he had prepared, because the present softness of their minds seemed to require something different. In fine, he had the satisfaction to find the evil redressed from that very day.

The other occasion was this: "We must not imagine,"

* Ep. 29, to Alypius.

says he "that a man has spoken powerfully, when he receives much applause. This is sometimes given to low turns of wit, and merely ornamental eloquence. But the sublime overwhelms the mind with its vehemence, it strikes them dumb, it melts them into tears. When I endeavoured to persuade the people of Cæsarea to abolish their barbarous sports, in which, at a certain time of the year, they fought publicly for several days, I said what I could; but while I heard only their acclamations, I thought I had done nothing; when they wept, I entertained a hope that the horrible custom they had received from their ancestors would be abolished.—It is now upwards of eight years since that time, and by the grace of God they have ever since been restrained from the practice." Here was true eloquence, and, what is of far more consequence, true piety in a preacher.

On the Trinity he wrote at large, closing his essay as follows: "O Lord our God, we believe in thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For the truth would not have said, Go, baptize all nations, in the name, &c. if thou wert not a Trinity. Nor wouldest thou command us to be baptized in the name of him who is not God. I have sought thee, and examined and laboured much in composing this treatise. My God, my only hope, hear me, lest, through weariness, I cease to seek thee. Thou, who wilt be found, and has given me increasing hope of finding thee, give me strength to seek thee. Before thee are my strength and my weakness. Preserve that and heal this. Before thee are my knowledge and ignorance. Where thou hast opened to me, uphold me, when I enter; where thou hast shut up, open to me when I knock. I would remember thee, understand thee, love thee. Augment in me these things, till thou perfectly form me anew.

I know it is written, in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin: but I would to God I spake only concerning thy word, and in praising thee; I should then do what is acceptable in thy sight, though I spake much. For thy Apostle would not have directed his son in the faith to preach the word, and to be instant* in season, out of season, were not this the case. Free me, O God, from the much inward speaking, which, while I fly to thy mercy, I feel in my miserable soul. For my thoughts are not silent, when my tongue is. Many, alas! are my thoughts, which thou knowest to be vain. Grant me not to consent to them; and, if my nature delights in them, grant me to disapprove, and not to dwell on them, even in a slumbering manner. Nor let them be so strong, as to proceed to any thing active; let my will, my conscience, be safe from them under thy defence. When we come to thee, many of those things we now say, shall cease, and thou shalt remain alone all in all, and we shall without end say one thing, praising thee in one, being made one in thee. What is thine in these books, may thine acknowledge; if there be any thing of mine, may thou and thine forgive."

As a remedy against much speaking in prayer, he advises to utter short and quick ejaculations, rather than long continued petitions, if the mind be not in a fervent state; but if the spirit be intent and vigorous, the petitions, he thinks may be prolonged without any danger of offending against our Lord's precept in the sermon on the mount. And he speaks in an instructive manner on the office of the Holy Spirit, as interceding for the saints with unutterable groanings. The great object in prayer, he observes, should constantly be, the enjoyment of God.

* 2 Tim. iv.

To the manifold labours of this bishop in preaching, visiting, and writing, was added the troublesome employment of hearing causes. For, according to the rules of 1 Cor. vi., the Christians of Hippo used to bring matters of controversy before the bishop. And the examination and decision of these engaged him till the hour of repast, and sometimes he was employed in them fasting the whole day. Certainly it is not reasonable that a Christian pastor should be statedly employed in such things: but Augustine, following the customary practice of the time, made it subservient to the purest purposes. He had by this an opportunity of examining the dispositions of his people, and their improvements or defects in faith and good works; and he explained to them, occasionally, their duties as Christians, by opening to them the word of God, by exhorting them to piety, and by rebuking sinners: And in all this he acted with perfect disinterestedness.

In attendance on councils he was frequent, and in them he distinguished himself in the defence both of Christian doctrine and discipline. In ordaining clergymen, he took care to follow the custom of the church, and to act with the concurrence of the majority of the people.* His dress, furniture, and diet, were moderated between extremes; and it will deserve to be mentioned, as an instance of superiority to popular superstition, that he always drank wine, but with great moderation. He constantly practised hospitality; and at table encouraged reading or argument; and as his spirit, ever humble and tender since conversion, could not bear the too fashionable mode of detraction and slander, he had a distich written on his table, which intimated, that whoever

* Possidonius

attacked the characters of the absent were to be excluded.*

Genseric, the king of the Vandals, invaded Africa, and made a dreadful desolation. To the tender mind of Augustine,† the devastation of the country, the cruelties in-

* *Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,*

Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.——Poss.

† The tenderness of his spirit, on one occasion, led him into an error in conduct, which much afflicted him. Fussala was a little city in the extremity of his diocese, forty miles from Hippo. The country about it was full of Donatists; and their reunion to the church was accompanied with difficulty. The priests sent by Augustine, were maimed, blinded, or murdered. Augustine, on account of the distance, was not capable of serving the people as he could wish; and he at length determined to settle a bishop there, who should undertake the charge of Fussala, and the neighbouring district. As soon as he had found a proper priest, he desired the primate of Numidia to come over, and in conjunction with himself, to ordain him. The priest, whom he had chosen, retracted, and the primate was arrived. Augustine was unwilling to send him back without doing the business, and through the facility of his temper, was induced to present for ordination, a young man named Anthony, whom he had from infancy educated in his monastery, who had never been tried as he ought to have been. The bishop of Hippo had soon occasion to repent of his good nature. The young prelate was complained of by his flock, for rapacity and licentiousness, and was too scandalous in his manners to be endured any longer. His connexion with Fussala was therefore dissolved by a former sentence. Anthony, however, appealed to the bishop of Rome, who was inclined to support him. Augustine insisted on the propriety of his expulsion, and maintained, that compassion for the man himself, as well as for the people, whom he had so much abused, required that the sentence should be supported, lest he should be hardened still more in iniquity. Anthony himself made restitution of the sums of which he had defrauded them; yet he prevailed afterwards on the primate of Numidia, to believe him innocent, and to interest himself in his favour. The spirit of Augustine, then threescore and eight years of age, was much broken with this affair. He condemned his own imprudence, and observed, that the danger, into which Anthony had cast both himself and the people, so much affected him, that he was almost resolved to relinquish the episcopal office, and bewail his error, the remainder of his days, in privacy.* As it appears that Augustine still governed the church of Fussala after this, it seems that the dispute was settled to his satisfaction, and that Anthony was not restored to his see.† The story deserves to be noticed, as illustrating the church discipline of the times, and the character of Augustine.

* Ep. 209.

† Ep. 224.

flicted on the pastors, the desolation of churches, and the destruction of all church order which ensued, must have been peculiarly afflicting. Count Boniface, one of the greatest Roman heroes of those times, undertook the defence of Hippo against the Barbarians. He had not been without convictions of divine things, and Augustine, who was intimate with him, had endeavoured to improve those convictions to salutary purposes.

He defended Hippo for fourteen months, which, after that time, with all Africa, fell under the power of the Vandals.

But Augustine was taken away from the evil to come. While he mourned under the miseries of the times, in company with Possidonius and several bishops, who had fled for shelter to Hippo, he told them, that he had prayed, either that God would free them from the siege, or endue his servants with patience, or take him out of the world to himself. In the third month of the siege he was seized with a fever, which ended in his dissolution, in the year 430. He lived seventy-six years, forty of which he had been a presbyter or bishop. He used to say, that a Christian should never cease to repent, even to the hour of his death. He had David's penitential psalms inscribed on the wall, in his last sickness, and he read and wept abundantly; and for ten days before he expired, he desired to be uninterrupted, that he might give himself wholly to devotion, except at certain intervals. He had preached the word of God constantly, till his last sickness. He left no will: he had neither money nor lands to leave. He left his library to the church. Of his own relations he had taken competent care before. "In his writings," says Possidonius, "the holy man appears: but those who

could have heard and seen him speak in public, and particularly in private conversation, would have seen still more."

CHAPTER V.

Jerom.

THIS most learned of the Roman fathers, was a monk: a term, which did not, at that time, convey the modern idea of the word. In Jerom's time, it meant chiefly the life of a private recluse Christian, who yet was fettered by no certain rules nor vows, but acted according to his own pleasure. Such a life suited the disposition of a studious person like Jerom. He was, however, made a presbyter of the church, but never would proceed any further in ecclesiastical dignity. He spent four years in the deserts of Syria, reading and studying with immense industry. A commentary on the prophet Obadiah, which he published, bore strong marks of juvenile indiscretion, as he afterwards frankly owned. And here, by the assistance of a Jew, who visited him, Nicodemus-like, in the evenings, lest he should give umbrage to his brethren, he acquired the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and with indefatigable labour he studied also the Chaldee and the Syriac.

He returned to Rome, but did not remain there. Spleen and calumny hastened the departure of Jerom from Rome. This great man had not learned to command his passions, and to disregard the breath of fame. Unjust aspersions on his character affected him with a very blameable acrimony. He retired again to the East: there several of his admirers followed him. He chose

Bethlehem as the seat of his old age, where Paula erected four monasteries, three for the women, over which she presided, and one for the men, in which Jerom lived the rest of his life, enjoying at times the society of his learned friends.

How much is it to be regretted, that Jerom and his friends should have so hidden their talent; that persons who loved Christ sincerely had not learned, like the Apostles and first Christians, to profess him in the most public walks of society, and by preaching and conversation to have instructed mankind in general! But such conduct would have required a self-denial and a charity, larger and of a more sublime nature than theirs; to live in the world, and yet to remain separate from it, shows a divine strength indeed.

Jerom was much engaged in a controversy with Jovianian, who opposed the growing superstitions of the age of which this father was too zealous a promoter: exalting abstinences and bodily sufferings too high.

It was a marvellous effect of Divine Providence, that while all other truths were more or less clouded, that which relates to the person of the Son of God, on whom rests the salvation of men, should remain unsullied. From St. John's days to Jerom we have seen the whole church unanimous in a comprehensive view of the Godhead and manhood of the divine Saviour: whoever opposed either, could never obtain the free sanction of the church. Imperial violence was ever found necessary to extort the admission of such persons into the church as pastors. This essential article of Christianity seems even to have been studied with the minutest accuracy: and few, perhaps, even of the best modern divines, have attained the precision of the ancients. Heresiarchs have not failed to

take advantage of this circumstance, and the narrow and imperfect conceptions, which some authors have formed of the person of Jesus Christ, have emboldened them to suppose, that the assertion of the manhood enervates the proof of the Godhead. Inferiority to the Father, confessed in any light, seems to startle many minds unaccustomed to the generous and extensive habits of thinking, in which the fathers excelled on this subject; while yet the answer is so easy to all supposed difficulties of this nature; "equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood."*

Jerom died in the ninety-first year of his age in the year 420.

CHAPTER VI.

Church in the West.

GERMANUS, bishop of Auxerre, was one of the greatest ornaments of Gaul in this century. He was a person of quality, and exercised the profession of a counsellor in the former part of his life. Amator,† his predecessor in the see, foresaw however, I apprehend, some symptom of grace in him, and ordained him deacon. A month after the decease of Amator he was unanimously elected bishop by the clergy, nobility, citizens, and peasants, and was forced to accept the office, notwithstanding the great reluctance which he discovered. He employed himself

* Athanasian Creed.

† He foresaw these, by the observation which he made of the frame of his spirit, rather than by any special revelation. From various places in Fleury I have collected this short account of Germanus, and, stripping it of the marvellous, have retained only the credible.

in the foundation of monasteries, and in enriching the church, while he impoverished himself; and for thirty years, from his ordination to his death, he lived in extreme austerity.

About the year 430, that is, about the time of Augustine's death, he visited the island of Great Britain, with an intention to oppose Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop called Severinus, who propagated heresy among the churches there.

Lupus, bishop of Troyes, accompanied Germanus in the mission, which was undertaken on the recommendation of a numerous council in Gaul. Lupus, governed his church fifty-two years, and was highly renowned for sanctity. These two bishops, on their arrival, preached not only in the churches, but also in the highways, and in the open country, and vast crowds attended their ministry. The Pelagians came to a conference; the doctrines of grace were debated; the bishops, supporting themselves by express passages of Scripture in the hearing of all the people, were allowed to be victorious, and Pelagianism was reduced to silence. At this time, the Picts, a race of barbarians who inhabited the north, and the Saxons, a German nation, called in by the Britons, as it is well known, to assist them against the Picts, united their forces against the natives. The latter, terrified at the approach of the enemy, had recourse to Germanus and Lupus. Many, having been instructed by them, desired baptism; and a great part of the army received it at Easter, in a church which they made of boughs* of trees twisted together. The festival being over, they marched against the enemy, with Germanus at their head. He, still remembering the profession in which

* Beda, 1 Hist.

he had spent great part of his youth, posted his men in a valley through which the enemy were to pass, surprised and defeated them. After these things, the two bishops returned to the continent. The deacon Palladius, being ordained bishop of Scotland, arrived there in the year 431. Scotland had never before seen a bishop, and was in a state of extreme barbarism.

In Gaul, the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism still maintained its ground, and Prosper and Hilary, who had written an account of it to Augustine, exerted themselves in defending the doctrines which he had taught. Cœlestine, of Rome, supported the same cause; and in the same year he published nine articles, which will deserve some consideration, as they show that the spark of truth was still alive amidst the mass of corruption in the Western church, and still, under God, preserved some degree of Christian holiness. In these articles, it is owned that all men are, by nature, under the power of sin, by reason of the fall, from which nothing but grace can deliver any man—that man is not good of himself: he needs a communication of God to him from God himself—nor can a man, though renewed, overcome the flesh and the devil, except he receive daily assistance—that God so worketh upon the hearts of men, that holy thoughts, pious intentions, and the least motion toward a good inclination, proceed from God. “We learn also,” says Cœlestine, “what we are to believe, from the prayers appointed by the apostles through the world, and observed with uniformity through the whole church; wherein it is petitioned, that faith may be granted to infidels, idolaters, Jews, and heretics; charity to schismatics, repentance to sinners, and regeneration to catechumens. These prayers are not empty forms; their effects are visible in the conversion of

many, for which thanks are returned to God. We must confess, that the grace of God prevents the merits of man; that it doth not take away free will, but delivers, enlightens, rectifies, and heals it. God is willing, such is his goodness, that his gifts should be our merits, and grants an eternal reward to them: he works in us to will and to do according to his pleasure; but his gifts are not idle in us; we co-operate with his grace, and, if we find remissness proceeding from our weakness, we immediately have recourse to him. As to the more difficult questions which have been discussed at large, we do not despise them, but need not treat of them. Suffice it that we have declared what we believe essential to the faith.*

Palladius, the pastor of Scotland, being dead, Cœlestine sent Patrick into the same parts in his stead. He was born in Scotland,† at a place now called Dunbarton. Having been carried captive into Ireland, and having remained there a few years, in which time he learnt the language and customs of the country, he was by some pirates afterwards conveyed into Gaul; and after various adventures, he returned a volunteer into Ireland, with a view to undertake the conversion of the barbarous natives, who seem, till this time, to have been without any acquaintance with Christianity. It is delightful to observe the motions of Providence, in causing the confusions of war and desolation to be subservient to the propagation of the gospel. Patrick, intent only on the cause of Christ, amidst all the various scenes in which he was tossed to and fro, was not discouraged by the ill success which at first attended his labours. The barbarous Irish refused to hear him, and he returned into Gaul, and spent some time with Germanus, of Auxerre, whose ser-

* Fleury, c. xii. 26.

† Fleury, b. xxvi, 13.

vices in Britain have been mentioned. The conversation and example of Germanus inflamed his mind with fresh zeal, and by his advice he went to Rome; that he might be strengthened in his pious views by the authority of Cœlestine. From this bishop he received such support and assistance as enabled him to revisit Ireland; and at length his success was so great, that to this day he is looked on as the apostle of Ireland. He first taught the Irish the use of letters; and while we pass over in silence the fictions of which these ages are full, there is no reason to doubt but that he was the instrument of real good to the Irish both with respect to this life and the next; nor ought such events to be omitted in the History of the Church of Christ. It were only to be wished, that we knew them more circumstantially. He died about the year 460, at an advanced age.

The church at Carthage had fallen into a great degree of corruption; but in 336 it was scourged by Genseric, king of the Vandals, who used his victory with great cruelty. He re-established Arianism. Attila, the Hun, united with Genseric in scourging the West. Genseric dying in 477, his son Huneric carried on the persecution of those who clave to the truth. He vied with the pagan emperors in ferocity. The same spirit was manifested by the faithful, that we have before noticed; and the same grace was given to support them.

They were maimed, they were bastinadoed, they were allowed to perish naked by the road side, they were torn by wild oxen, they were sent into the desert, but under all the Lord was with them.

At length, after an horrible reign of seven years and ten months, in which time the church was purged by as severe a persecution as any ever known, in the year 485

died the tyrant Huneric of a disease, in which he was corroded by worms,—a signal monument of divine justice! Gontamond, his nephew and successor, stopped the persecution and recalled Eugenius to Carthage. In the year 487, a council was held at Rome, with Felix, the bishop, at its head,* in which were forty bishops of Italy, four of Africa, and seventy-six priests. The rules of penance, prescribed by this synod, on occasion of the late persecution, partook partly of the prevailing superstition, and partly of the primitive strictness of discipline. Clergymen, who had suffered themselves to be rebaptized, were deprived not only of the ministry, but even of lay-communion, till their death. Other articles breathe the same severe spirit: yet I rejoice, amidst the excess of discipline, to find, that real religion was honoured. One rule of the council deserves to be mentioned for its good sense: “No clergyman shall receive into his city the penitent of another bishop, without his certificate in writing.”

In the churches of Italy and Gaul, Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia, was extremely useful by his intercessions with Theodoric, the Astrogoth, and Gondebaud, the Burgundian king. Though they were both Arians, they knew his excellence, and as it has been with Swartz in latter days, so it was then, the humble Christian was found the most efficient servant of the state.

About the year 496, Clovis, king of the Franks, was baptized, and received into the general church. He himself, perfidious, ambitious, and cruel, was no honour to any religious denomination. But some remarkable circumstances of Providence attended his reception of Christianity; which will therefore deserve a place in these

* Ep. 7. Felix.

memoirs. The Franks, or French, were a German nation known long before, who dwelt about the lower Rhine. Having passed this river, they entered into Gaul, under the conduct of Pharamond, their first king, about the year 420. Clodio, Merovæus, Childeric, and Clovis, reigned in succession after him. Like the rest of the barbarous nations, who desolated the lower empire, they still advanced gradually in conquests, and Clovis ruined the Roman power entirely in Gaul. But he had to contend with other barbarous invaders, all of whom, however, he subdued at length, and by much carnage and violence he became the founder of the French monarchy. Wicked as he was, he was fitted to become a useful instrument of Providence, like Henry VIII. of England, many ages after. He had married Clotilda, niece of Gondebaud, king of the Burgundians; she was zealous for the doctrine of the Trinity, though both her uncle and the whole nation of the Burgundians professed Arianism. Could her private history be known, it would probably be instructive and edifying. For what else but the grace of God and the effectual operation of his Spirit, could induce a royal lady, brought up among heretics, and given in marriage to a powerful Pagan, to persevere alone so firmly in the apostolical faith, in an age when divine truth had scarcely a single patron of great power in Europe?***

Having a son by her husband Clovis, she endeavoured to persuade him, to permit the child to be baptized, and earnestly reasoned with him on the vanity of his idols, and preached Christianity to him with much sincerity. Clovis, who, it seems, had great affection for his queen, consented at length to the baptism of the infant; but he died a

* Greg. Tur. 11 Hist. c. xxvi.

few days after. Clovis in a rage declared, "I have lost my child, because he has been devoted to your deities; had he been devoted to mine he would have lived." The pious queen answered, "I thank God, who has thought me worthy to bear a child, whom he has called into his kingdom." She had afterwards another son, who was baptized by the name of Clodomer. On his falling sick, the king said, "Yes, I see he will die like his brother, because he has been baptized in the name of your Christ." The mother prayed for his recovery, and the child was restored to health. Clotilda persevering in her exhortations, Clovis heard them, patient, but still inflexible. It pleased God at length to give him a striking lesson, from which he ought to have learned the true art of happiness. Fighting with the Alemanni, he was upon the point of being entirely defeated. Finding himself in the utmost danger, he lifted up his eyes to heaven with tears, and said, "O Jesus Christ! whom Clotilda affirms to be the Son of the living God, I implore thy aid. If thou givest me victory, I will believe and be baptized; for I have called upon my own gods in vain." While he was speaking, the Alemanni turned their backs, and began to flee, and at length submitted and craved quarter.

Penetrated with a sense of Divine goodness, as many wicked men have been for a time, Clovis submitted to the instructions of Remi, bishop of Rheims, whom the queen sent to teach him. The chief difficulty he started was, that his people would not follow him in his change of religion. This was obviated by the facility with which they received Remi's lessons. What the lessons were, and what exercises of mind and conscience attended the change, we know not; the external circumstances and forms alone we are informed of, and they are not very in-

structive. The king himself was baptized at Rheims, and so was his sister, and three thousand of his army. He was at that time the only prince who professed orthodox Christianity. Anastasius, the Eastern emperor, favoured heresy; the rest of the European princes were Arians. Thus a woman was employed as the instrument of a change in her husband; it is true the change was only nominal, but it was followed by very signal effects in Europe, namely, by the recovery of the apostolical faith, and no doubt by the happy conversion of many individuals.

In the year 494, Gontamond, the Vandal, still increasing his kindness to the church, opened all the places of public worship, after they had been shut ten years and a half, and, at the desire of Eugenius, recalled all the other bishops. He died in the year 496, and was succeeded by his brother Thrasamond.

CHAPTER VII.

Church in the East.

THE same evils which deformed the church in the West pervaded the East also, and to a greater degree. The times were sufficiently removed from those of the apostles, for corruption to exist in considerable power. The spiritual Israel, though like those in the wilderness, disciplined by severe visitations, still clung to its idols. Monasticism and superstition generally increased.

Arsaces, who was very old, and who had been appointed bishop of Constantinople in the room of Chrysostom, died in the year 405. In the next year Atticus, who had

been a principal agent in the persecution of Chrysostom, succeeded him. He seems a person extremely well adapted to an age and metropolis of formal and decent religion, neither so zealous as to give offence by his animadversions, nor so dissolute as to excite disgust by his immoralities. He understood mankind, had good sense; and though he had little learning, yet he possessed the art of showing off that little to the best advantage. So exquisite a courtier as he would naturally gain over large numbers of the discontented; yet there were some, who chose rather to meet for worship in the open fields than to communicate with Atticus. This bishop used to compose sermons, which he recited from memory; at length he ventured to preach extempore, but he was not admired from the pulpit.

The Christians in Persia were exposed to a persecution brought upon them by the indiscreet zeal of one of their bishops, who ordered one of the temples where the Persians worshipped fire, to be destroyed. This he did, presuming on the royal favour, but it gave the Magi a great advantage, which they improved to the destruction of all the churches throughout Persia. This persecution lasted thirty years, and was only checked by the arms of the emperor Theodosius II.

An action of Acacius, bishop of Amida, on the frontiers of Persia, in the course of this war, deserves more praise than any military exploits whatever. The Romans* had taken seven thousand prisoners, whom they would not restore, and who were perishing by famine. The Persian king was much vexed at this, but knew not how to relieve them. Acacius, touched with the distress of the captives, assembled his clergy, and spake thus to

* Socrates, B. vii. 21.

them: "Our God has no need either of dishes or cups; since, then, our church has many gold and silver vessels from the liberality of the people, let us, by means of them, free and relieve these captive soldiers." In effect, he ordered the vessels to be melted down, paid the ransom of the Persians to the Roman soldiers, gave the captives provisions and necessities for their journey, and sent them home to their king. This was to conquer in a Christian manner. The king desired personally to make his grateful acknowledgments to the bishop, who was accordingly directed by Theodosius to wait upon the monarch.

The virtue of mutual forbearance between the general church and dissenters prevailed beyond doubt at this time: the prudent and moderate characters of the bishops of both parties, as well as the uncommon meekness of the emperor, contributed much to this.*

The heresy of Nestorius rose in this century. He seems to have regarded the union between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ rather as moral than real, and to have preferred the idea of a connexion between the two natures to a union.

Eutyches, the monk, raised a second heresy, which denied the existence of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. This extreme is opposite to that of Nestorius.

When will the minds of men be content to submit to the plain teaching of the word of God? They seek to follow an ignis fatuus, their own reason, rather than the light of Divine revelation.

* Let an instance of this be drawn from the funeral of Paul, bishop of the Novatians, whose corpse was attended to his grave with singing of psalms by Christians of all denominations. The man, for his holiness of life, had been held in universal estimation.

As early as the close of this century, we see the bishops of Rome beginning to look toward supremacy. The seat of imperial power being their diocese, they silently obtained an influence; but in its beginnings it was extremely small, and whenever declared, openly resisted. Cœlestine, however, of whom we have spoken, was a good man, diligent in his proper vocation. Leo, who followed him, looked more to the amplification of his see.

He attempted to extend his influence in France, but met with a firm resistance.

He himself laboured in general like other bishops. He preached and fed his flock at Rome; and a number of his sermons are yet extant. The faith of the church, concerning the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, was not neglected in the course of his ministry. This was still the prevailing doctrine, notwithstanding the subtle and manifold opposition made to it. Leo himself was one of the ablest instruments of its vindication; and whether it is probable that he was so only in a speculative manner, let the reader judge from the following passage of his ninth sermon on the Nativity. "For unless faith believe, that both substances were united in one person, language explains it not; and therefore matter for divine praise never fails, because the abilities of him who praises never suffice. Let us rejoice, then, that we are unequal to speak of so great a mystery of our mercy; and when we are not able to draw forth the depth of our salvation, let us feel that it is good for us to be vanquished in our researches. For no man more approaches to the knowledge of the truth, than he who understands, that in divine things, though he makes much proficiency, something always remains for him to investigate."

Sixth Century.

CHAPTER I.

Fulgentius.—Justinian.—Gregory.

THE church in Africa was in danger from Thrasamond, the Arian successor of Huneric. He forbade the ordination of bishops for the vacant churches. But the African bishops unanimously determined not to obey the order. Among those ordained, was Fulgentius, a man distinguished for piety. He, with two hundred and nineteen other bishops, was banished to Sardinia. In 523 the persecution ceased.

One remark of Fulgentius, deserves to be noticed. Seeing king Theodoric at Rome, in the midst of a magnificent assembly, his reflection was: "If men in this life, seeking vanity, attain such dignity, what will be the glory of saints, who seek true honour in the New Jerusalem?" In one of his treatises, he shows that a conceit of our perfection, would lead us into deadly pride, and recommends an humble contrite spirit, throughout the whole of a Christian's progress.

In an assemblage of bishops at Agde, in which Cæsarius of Arles presided, it was ordained that all clergymen who served the church faithfully, should receive salaries proportioned to their services; also that "in all churches the creed shall be explained to the competents* on the same day, a week before Easter. All such laymen as

* Who seem to have been those who applied for baptism.

shall not receive the communion three times a year, at the three great festivals,* shall be looked on as heathens. Oratories may be allowed in the country to those who live at a great distance from the parish churches, for the ease and convenience of their families; but they must appear at their parish churches on certain solemn festivals."

Cæsarius was a true labourer. He gave himself entirely to reading and preaching. He preached on all Sundays and holidays. If he was himself hindered from preaching, he caused his own sermons, or those of Augustine, whom he highly revered, or those of Ambrose, to be read by other ministers. His style was plain, and adapted to common capacities. He entered into practical particulars, searched the consciences of his hearers, and severely reproved idolatrous and superstitious usages.

It is pleasing to behold such men faithful amid the wide prevalence of error.

Justinian, famous for his code of laws, came to the throne in Constantinople in 527. He, with great liberality, promoted the cause of truth, though there is reason to fear his heart was not rightly influenced. He built churches, but at the same time he oppressed. He upheld the gospel, but he gave himself to calumny. In a political sense he was very successful, for he reunited Africa and Italy to the Roman empire.

A council held in 529, at Orange, in France, passed the following, among other canons: "If any one say, that the beginning or increase of faith, and the very affection of belief is in us, not by the gift of grace, that is by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit correcting our will from infidelity to faith, from impiety to piety; but, by na-

* Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide.

ture, he is an enemy to the doctrine of the Apostles." "If any man affirm, that he can, by the vigour of nature, think any thing good which pertains to salvation as he ought, or choose, or consent to the saving, that is to evangelical preaching, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all the sweet relish in consenting to and believing the truth, he is deceived by an heretical spirit."

From these it would appear, that Semi-Pelagianism had received a check, at least in the South of France.

Another council decreed according to the custom observed in Italy, that all country priests should receive into their houses young men, who might be readers in the church, that they should educate them with a paternal regard, causing them to learn the Psalms, to read the Scriptures, and to be acquainted with the word of God; and in this way should provide themselves with worthy successors.

Belisarius having recovered Africa, a large council was held at Carthage, by which the Arians and Donatists were forbidden to hold assemblies.

Justinian dying, Justin, his nephew, reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER II.

Gregory.

THE most prominent individual in the church, during this century, was Gregory I. bishop of Rome. He was trained, according to the custom of the times, in a monastery, where he fell into a mistaken spirit of quietism.

Called forth from thence to the ministry of the cross, he scarce knew how to accommodate himself to active usefulness. He was a heavenly minded man, and he seemed to forget that this is a land of labour, not of rest, and that indeed, we are more certain of blessing in the path of suitable effort than in seclusion.

Ordained to the ministry, he was sent from Rome to Constantinople on ecclesiastical affairs. There he was useful in confuting error. Returned to Rome, he laboured zealously in the pastoral office. The following is part of a sermon preached by him during the raging of the plague.

“Beloved brethren, we ought to have feared the scourge of God before it came; at least, after having felt it, let us tremble. Let grief open to us the passages of conversion; and let the punishment, which we feel, dissolve the hardness of our hearts. For, to use the prophet’s language, ‘the sword hath come even into the soul.’ Our people, behold, are smitten with a weapon of divine indignation, and each carried off by the rapid devastation. Languor does not precede death, but death itself with hasty strides, as you see, outstrips the tardy course of languor. Every person, who is smitten, is carried off, before he has opportunity to bewail his sins. Conceive in what state that man will appear before his Judge, who is hurried off in the midst of his sins.—Let each of us repent, while we have time to weep, before the sword devour us.—Let us call our ways to remembrance.—Let us come before his face with confession, and lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord.—Truly he gives to our trembling hearts a confidence, who proclaims by the prophet, ‘I would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.’”

The bishop of Rome dying, Gregory was chosen in his stead. But he used every means in his power to avoid the office. The gates, however, were watched, and his flight was prevented for a time. But he found means to be conveyed in a wicker basket out of the city, and concealed himself three days. The zealous search of the people discovered him at length, and he was obliged to enter upon his bishopric. This happened in the year 590, during the reign of Mauritius.

He discharged the duties of his office most faithfully. Other bishops had been sedulous to adorn churches with gold or silver; he gave himself wholly, so far as he could, to the care of souls.* The melancholy circumstances of his accession, corresponded with the gloomy state of the church,—in the East, almost universally fallen,—in the West tarnished with much superstition, and defiled by variety of wickedness. The whole period of his episcopacy, which was thirteen years and a half,† was disastrous beyond measure, because of the ferocious Lombards; and Gregory himself was firmly persuaded that the end of the world was near. Hence he had evidently a strong contempt of sublunary things, and loved to refresh his mind with prospects beyond the grave.

Though he gave in to the notion, then beginning to spread in the West, that the bishop of Rome had superintendence over all the churches,—a notion growing out of the general preponderance of Rome in civil matters—he was himself humble. He found time to expound the Scriptures, to perform the office of a sedulous pastor, and to write much for the instruction of mankind. But he suffered much in mind, in consequence of the great amount of extraneous cares thrown upon him in cases

* Bede.

† Idem.

which belonged to temporal rulers. Ardently did he long for retirement, but he was on a tempestuous sea, from which it was difficult to escape.

He delighted in communion with those who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity. "I received your letter," says he to Anastasius of Antioch, "as a weary man does rest, as a sick man health, as a thirsty person a fountain, as one overcome with heat a shade. I read not mere words; I perceived the heart itself to be discovering your affection towards me in the spirit."

"How I am overloaded, no words can express; you may form some idea from the brevity of my letter, in which I say so little of him whom I love above all. I have begged of the emperor to allow you to visit me at Rome, that while I enjoy your company, we may relieve the tediousness of our pilgrimage by conversing together of the heavenly country."*

He was successful in the conversion of the Lombards from Arianism, a work in which he laboured much.

One of the bishops in Spain permitting the Jews to be molested, he wrote that they should rather be won over to the truth by the *sweetness* of gospel preaching. "Preach," said he, "that their dark minds may be illuminated, and that under God they may be brought to real regeneration."†

"Weighty indeed," says Gregory in one of his letters, "Weighty indeed is the office of a pastor. He must be an example to the flock, and after this he must learn to keep himself humble. He must ever be intent on the ministry of the word, remembering who hath said, *occupy till I come*. This we then truly execute, when by life and doctrine we gain the souls of our neighbours.

* Ep. 7.

† B. I. Ep. 45.

strengthen the weak by setting before them the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and bend the proud by sounding aloud the punishments of hell, when we spare none against truth, and when given up to heavenly friendships, we fear not human enmity. I tremble at my own infirmity. How can I sustain the last judgment, seeing so very little fruit of my labours. Dearest brother, I implore your prayers for me. By the union of charity we have a common interest."

"Why wish you," said he to Anastasius, "the wings of a dove, which you have already? The wings are the love of God and our neighbour. By them the church flies through the earth: if you had not these wings, you would not have come to me by* your epistles with so much affection.—As your life is necessary to all good men, may you, after a long time, arrive at the joys of the heavenly country!"

The bishop of Constantinople, doubtless from the same cause which has led the bishop of Rome to do so, claimed to himself the title of universal bishop, and his claim was confirmed by an Eastern council. The size of both of these dioceses, and their situation with reference to the rest of the empire, powerfully tempted their bishops to this extravagance. But John of Constantinople was not equal to Gregory as a Christian.

Image worship beginning to be introduced, Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, broke the images. Gregory thought they might be permitted to continue as books for the illiterate.

Amid all his labours, the bishop of Rome suffered severely in body.—"I can find nothing else," he writes, "to say of myself, than that as a just punishment of my

* B. VII. Ep. 3.

sins, I have been almost eleven months confined to my bed. I am so oppressed with the gout, that life is a heavy punishment. I faint daily through pain, and breathe after death as my remedy.*

“Let us take care, that we pass not from one degree of torment to another, and let us consider the goodness of God, who threatens us with death, that he may imprint in us an edifying fear of his judgments. How many sinners have continued immersed in sin through life without a head-ach, and have suddenly been cast into hell!”

On no occasion was Gregory wanting to impress on men's minds the care of the soul. Two persons having requested his assistance in their temporal difficulties, after having said what the case required, he exhorted them not to murmur at the divine dispensations, nor to undertake any thing unjust under the pretence of necessity, but to fix their hope on the mercy of their Redeemer, who forsaketh not those who trust in him, to occupy their minds with divine things, and to repose on him who gives what we have not, repairs what we have lost, and preserves what he has repaired.†

He reproved the nobles and landholders of Sardinia, for suffering their labourers to remain in a state of idolatry. He justly observes, that they were bound in conscience to take care of the spiritual instruction of those who laboured for them in temporal things; and he earnestly exhorts them to promote the charitable work.‡ The selfishness and insensibility, with which so

* In another letter he speaks of a disorder different from the gout; namely, a grievous burning heat, that spread over all his body, and took away his spirits. By such severe exercises was this good man trained for the kingdom of heaven, and he evidently grew in humility, tender sympathy with others in distress, and ardent breathings for the heavenly country.

† B. XI. 23.

‡ B. III. 28.

many, in modern times, can reap lucrative advantages, from the labours of mariners, slaves, and apprentices, with no more attention to their best interests, than if they were of the brute creation, here naturally forces itself on our attention.

CHAPTER III.

Great Britain.

THE faith of the gospel was preserved in Wales and Cornwall, and some parts of Scotland and Ireland, while the major part of England was covered with Saxon idolatry.

But for a century and a half, the purity of the faith had been declining. The Angles or Saxons destroyed every evangelical appearance in the heart of the island. No barbarians were ever more ferocious or more idolatrous; and the Britons, who escaped their ravages, oppressed one another with civil broils. Being favoured with some cessation from their wars with the Saxons, they lost by degrees all traces of former piety, though the form of Christianity still remained. One proof among others, which the old historian Gildas gives of their entire want of Christian zeal is, that they took not the least pains for the conversion of the Saxons. Seven Saxon kingdoms, called the Heptarchy, were now formed, altogether ignorant and idolatrous, while the few British churches were inattentive to the propagation of Christian truth in the island. And the Saxons continued, some of them for a century, others more than two centuries, immersed in darkness.*

* Bede.

It was about 150 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, that Gregory sent his famous mission toward the close of the sixth century. It was no sudden thought, but the effect of much deliberation. Even before his consecration at Rome, walking one day in the forum, he saw some very handsome youths exposed to sale. Asking of what country they were, he was informed they were of the island of Britain. "Are the inhabitants of that island Christians or Pagans?" They are Pagans, was the reply. "Alas!" said he, deeply sighing, "that the prince of darkness should possess countenances so luminous, and that so fair a front should carry minds destitute of eternal grace: What is the name of the nation?" Angli, it was said. "In truth they have angelic countenances, and it is a pity they should not be co-heirs with angels in heaven. What is the province from which they come?" Deira, that is, Northumberland, he was told. "It is well," said he, "De ira, snatched from the wrath of God, and called to the mercy of Christ. What is the name of their king?" Ella, was the answer. Playing upon the name, "Alleluia should be sung to God in those regions." Impressed with the importance of the object, he earnestly entreated the then Roman bishop to send a mission to the island, offering himself as one ready for the task. Nothing but the officious benevolence of the Roman citizens prevented the work at that time. Gregory was too much beloved at Rome, to be allowed to leave it.

It was the character of Gregory to pursue with unwearied attention any plan or scheme of piety or discipline, which he had once conceived. After his consecration, in the year 595 he directed a presbyter, whom he had sent into France, to instruct some young Saxons of seventeen or eighteen years of age, in Christianity. He

intended to prepare them for the mission into Britain; and in the year 597 he actually sent missionaries thither. They were a number of monks, at the head of whom was one named Augustine. In obedience to Gregory's directions, they proceeded on their journey; but their hearts failed them, when they reflected on the difficulties and dangers to which they thought themselves likely to be exposed. The faith and zeal and simplicity of a Christian missionary were at this time grown rare in the world; and Augustine was sent back by the rest, to entreat Gregory to discharge them from the service. The prelate wrote exhortatory letters, advising them to proceed in confidence of divine aid. He informed them, that it had been better not to have begun a good work, than to recede from it afterwards. He entreated them not to be deterred by the labour of the journey, nor by the breath of malevolence. He set before them the heavenly prospects, and prayed that he himself might see the fruit of their labour in the eternal country. For though, says he, I cannot labour with you, may I at the same time be found in the joy of retribution, because I am willing to labour! Nor did he neglect any means proper to accommodate the missionaries: he recommended them to the attention of Etherius, bishop of Arles, and secured them all the assistance in France, that might expedite their passage into Britain, and every convenience which they needed. Thus animated, they arrived in Britain.*

Ethelbert, king of Kent, assigned Augustine a habitation in the isle of Thanet. Here he remained at first with his associates, who were nearly forty. By the direction of Gregory, they had taken with them French interpreters, by whose means they informed the king, that

* Bede, B. I.

they were come from Rome,* and brought him the best tidings in the world, eternal life to those who received them, and the endless enjoyment of life with the living and true God. After some days, Ethelbert paid them a visit; but being apprehensive of enchantments, he took care to receive them in the open air, where he thought he should be safer than in a house. The missionaries met him, singing litanies for their own salvation, and that of those for whose sake they came thither. Sitting down by the king's direction, they preached to him and his attendants the word of life. I cannot produce the smallest extract of the sermon; but that it explained the fundamentals, at least, of the gospel, there seems no reason to doubt. One may form some idea of it by the king's answer, which was to this effect: "They are fine words and promises, which ye bring, but because they are new and uncertain, I cannot afford my assent to them, nor relinquish those religious practices which I myself, together with all the English nation, have for so long a time observed. But as ye are come hither from a great distance, and as I seem to discover that ye are willing to communicate to us those things, which ye believe to be true and most excellent, we are not willing to disturb you, but rather to receive you in a friendly manner, and to afford you what may be necessary for your support; nor do we hinder you from uniting all, whom ye can persuade by preaching, to the faith of your religion." He gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, with all necessary accommodations, and the license of preaching the word. As they approached the city, they sang in concert this litany; "We pray thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thine anger and thy fury may be removed from this

* Bede, B. I. Ep. 25.

city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia.”

The king of Kent could see no selfish motive that was likely to influence these men. They spake with an earnestness that showed their own conviction of the excellency of their doctrine, and their desire of profiting their fellow creatures. Not an atom of gain was to be acquired to the see of Rome; the whole mission was disinterested. Hence the candid prince was induced to give them countenance; and the gospel appears to have been preached by these missionaries with plainness and sincerity.

Their conduct at Canterbury was correspondent to these beginnings. They prayed, fasted, watched, preached the word of life to all, as opportunity served: they lived as men above the world: received nothing from those whom they taught except necessities: they practised what they taught, and showed a readiness to suffer, or even to die, for the truth which they preached. Some believed and were baptized, admiring their innocent lives, and tasting the sweetness of their doctrine. Near the city there was an old church, built in the times of the Romans, in which queen Bertha, the wife of Ethelbert herself a Christian, was wont to pray. In this the missionaries first held their assemblies, sang, prayed, preached, and baptized, till, the king himself being converted to the faith,* they obtained a larger license of preaching every where, and of building or repairing churches. At length the king himself was baptized.

Augustine returning into France, received ordination, as the archbishop of the English nation, from the bishop of Arles, and returning into Britain, sent Laurentius the

* I hope Bede's expression (B. I. Ep. 26,) is true in the proper sense of the word.

presbyter, and Peter the monk, to acquaint Gregory with his success, and to receive answers to various questions. To his inquiries concerning the maintenance of the clergy, Gregory answered, that the donations made to the church were, by the custom of the Roman see, divided into four portions, one for the bishop and his family to support hospitality, a second to the clergy, a third to the poor, a fourth to the reparation of churches: that as the pastors were all monks, they ought to live in common, with a remarkable exception, which proves that the absolute prohibition of marriage, one of the marks of Antichrist,* was not yet enjoined the clergy, namely, that those of them who preferred the marriage state, might be allowed to marry, and receive their maintenance out of the monastery. To another question, which related to the diversity of customs and liturgies in different churches, the answer of Gregory was liberal; namely, that the new bishop was not bound to follow the precedent of Rome, but that he might select whatever parts or rules appeared the most eligible, and best adapted to promote the piety of the infant church of England, and compose them into a system for its use.

Augustine having intimated, that the harvest was plentiful, but that the labourers were few, Gregory sent him more missionaries, and directed him to constitute a bishop at York, who might have other subordinate bishops; yet, in such a manner, that Augustine of Canterbury should be metropolitan of all England.

Gregory particularly excelled in devotional composition. Litanies had been used in the west before his time, in calamitous seasons, as during plague or famine. These were collected, and the choicest parts selected from them.

* 1 Tim. iv.

and compiled, through the care of Gregory, into one large litany, not much different from that used by the church of England at this day. It was much corrupted afterwards in the popish times, was reformed by Hermanus, archbishop of Cologne, in the days of Luther, and afterwards improved by our reformers.

But the church of England is not only indebted to Gregory for the Litany. In his sacramentary he embodied the collects of the ancient church, and improved old, or made new ones. Galasius, before him, had appointed public prayers, composed by himself or others. These were all placed in the offices by Gregory. And by a comparison of our book of Common Prayer with his Sacramentary, it is evident, that almost all the collects for Sundays, and the principal festivals in the church of England, were taken out of the latter. To me it appears to be an advantage, that our reformers followed antiquity so much in the work. The purification of the ancient services from the corrupt and idolatrous mixtures of popery, was as strong an indication of their judgment as the composition of prayers altogether new could have been, which, however, they scrupled not to introduce in various parts of the Liturgy. From the brief account I have given, it appears, that the service of our church is far more ancient than the Roman Missal, properly speaking. And whoever has attended to the superlative simplicity, fervor, and energy of the prayers, and of the collects particularly, will have no hesitation in concluding, that they must have been composed in a time of true evangelical light and godliness. It is impossible indeed to say, how early some parts of the Liturgy were written; but doubtless they are of very high antiquity. Many persons, in dark times, and under the disadvantage of sloth-

ful ignorant pastors, have been enlightened and nourished through their medium, and not a few, I trust, of my readers can justly confess with me, how much their devotion has been assisted by the public use of them. Let any unprejudiced person compare with the Liturgy several forms of prayer composed in modern times, and he will find an unction to attend the former, of which the latter is destitute. The present age is certainly much tinctured, in general, with a sceptical, philosophic spirit, which in its nature is not favourable to the production of devotional compositions.

Seventh Century.

CHAPTER I.

Great Britain.—John the Almoner.—Mahomet.—Monothelites.

THE churches in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, refused to conform to the church planted in England. Their bishops did not acknowledge Augustine, nor his successor Laurentius.

Ethelbert dying, idolatry revived to considerable extent, especially in London. But Eadbald, king of Kent, becoming converted, upheld the truth, and was instrumental in extending it among the Northumbrians; for Edwin their king desiring his sister in marriage, he refused, until a promise was given that she should enjoy her religion, and that Edwin himself would receive it if it appeared to be from God. At length Edwin was convinced, but he was in no hurry to be baptized, but resolved to

examine seriously the grounds and reasons of Christianity. He attended Paulinus's instructions, held conferences with prudent and knowing persons, and was himself observed, frequently to commune with his own heart, in silence, and anxiously to inquire what was true religion. All who use his methods will not fail to know the truth.

Edwin was doubtless in good earnest, and at length held a consultation with his intimate friends and counsellors. "What is," says he, "this hitherto unheard of doctrine, this new worship?" Coifi, the chief of the priests, answered, "See you, O king, what this is, which is lately preached to us? I declare most frankly what I have found to be true, that the religion we have hitherto followed is of no value. If the gods could do any thing, they would more particularly distinguish me with their favours who have served them so diligently. If the new doctrine be really better, let us embrace it." Another of the nobles observed, that he had taken notice of a swallow, which had rapidly flown through the king's house, entering by one door and going out at the other. This happened, he said, when the king was sitting at supper in the hall: a fire burning in the midst, and a room being heated, a tempest of rain or snow raged without; the poor swallow felt indeed a temporary warmth, and then escaped out of the room. "Such," says he, "is the life of man; but what goes before, or comes after, is buried in profound darkness. Our ignorance then, upon such principles as hitherto we have embraced, is confessed; but if this new doctrine really teach us any thing more certain, it will deserve to be followed." These and similar* reflections were made by the king's counsellors. Coifi expressed also a desire to hear Paulinus preach,

* *Id.* C. 13.

which, by the king's order, was complied with. The chief priest, having heard the sermon, exclaimed, "I knew formerly, that what we worshipped was nothing; because the more studiously I sought for truth, the less I found it. Now I openly declare, that in this preaching appears the truth, which is able to afford us life, salvation, and eternal bliss. I advise that we instantly destroy the temples and altars, which we have served in vain." The king feeling the conviction with no less strength, openly confessed the faith of Christ, and asked Coifi, who should be the first man that should profane the idolatrous places. "I ought to do it," replied the priest, "I, who worshipped them in folly, will give an example to others in destroying them, by the wisdom given me from the true God." He immediately went to the temple and profaned it; rejoicing in the knowledge of the Most High, and ordered his companions to burn the building with its enclosures.

In the eleventh year of Edwin's reign, this prince with all his nobles and very many of the commonalty was baptized, 180 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, and in the year of Christ 627. This was performed at York in a wooden oratory, in which Edwin had been first proposed as a catechumen for baptism. By the advice of Paulinus he afterwards began to build on the same spot a church of stone, which however he did not live to finish, but it was completed by Oswald, his successor. Paulinus, first bishop of York, continued for six years, till the death of Edwin, to preach the gospel; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Edwin's children were afterwards baptized; and so strong

* They are Bede's words; the scriptural reader knows whence he borrowed them. Id. C. 14.

was the desire of his subjects for Christianity, that Paulinus coming with the king and queen to a royal villa, called Adregin, spent there thirty-six days in teaching and baptizing from morning till night. At another time he baptized, in the river Swale,* which flows near Catterick, a number of persons who resorted thither. Many of these conversions may be supposed to have been the result of mere complaisance to the court. But there is every reason to believe, that there was a real effusion of the Spirit at this time. And, in the present age, when men profess much to think for themselves, it will not be easy to find a person in high life attending with a more cool and reasonable a spirit to the nature and evidences of true religion, than Edwin and his nobles did at a time which we call extremely barbarous. They thought impartially, and they had the indispensable qualification of being serious in their researches.

Edwin induced also Carpwald, king of the East Angles, to embrace the gospel.

But Edwin was slain, and Northumberland overrun by the neighbouring pagans. Oswald, however, the successor of Edwin, re-established the gospel. The zeal of this monarch was indeed extraordinary, to induce him to take such pains. Encouraged by his protection, Irish ministers came into the North of England, and churches were erected; the gospel was preached, and Northumberland, by the zeal and piety of the new missionaries, recovered the ground which it had lost. Even to the year 716† the principles of evangelical piety flourished in the Irish school; at which time this people were reduced to the Roman communion.

* Sualva, qui vicum juxta, Cataractam præterfluit.

† Id. C. 4.

In the mean time, Byrinus was sent from Rome into Britain, who, arriving among the West Saxons, and finding them all pagans, laboured to instruct them. Cynigilsus, their king, the father-in-law of Oswald, received baptism from him. The two princes gave to Byrinus the city of Dorcinca,* where he resided as bishop, and the gospel was propagated with success through this branch of the heptarchy.

In Kent, Eadbald died in the year 640, and was succeeded by his son Easconbert, who reigned twenty-four years, was zealous in the support of godliness, and was the first Saxon king who totally destroyed all the idols in his dominions.

Oswald at length, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, was slain in battle.

Providence was, however, preparing the way for the propagation of the gospel through the whole heptarchy. Young Penda, son of the tyrant of Mercia, desiring in marriage the daughter of Oswy, brother and successor to Oswald, his reception of Christianity was made the condition; and the young prince, we are told, on hearing the doctrines of the gospel preached, was induced to declare, that he would become a Christian, even if Oswy's daughter were denied him. Two years before the death of old Penda, the son married the Northumbrian princess, and patronized Christianity in that part of his father's dominions, which was committed to his government. But the latter renewed hostilities against Oswy, and at length was slain in battle.† Oswy, now master of Mercia and Northumberland, applied himself to propagate Christi-

* Now Dorchester, near Oxford.

† The battle was fought between Oswy and Penda, near Loyden, now Leeds, in Yorkshire, at Winwidfield, on the river Winyæd, now Aire.

anity among his new subjects. Through his influence also the gospel was restored to the kingdom of the East Saxons; and London, which had rejected the ministry of Mellitus, again embraced the religion of Christ.

In this century, Kentigern, bishop of Glasgow in Scotland, being expelled from his see, founded a monastery, and a bishopric on the banks of the river Elwy in north Wales. Archbishop Usher, quoting John of Tinmouth, says, there were in the abbey 965 monks, one of whom was named Asaph. Kentigern, being called back to Glasgow, appointed Asaph abbot and bishop of Llan-Elwy. Of Asaph it is recorded, that he was a zealous preacher, and that he used to say, "they envy the salvation of souls, who withstand the preaching of the Word." The see has since borne his name; and he seems to have had a spirit superior to the monastic superstition, in which he was educated.* Marianus Scotus, in his Chronicle, says, in regard to this century, "Ireland was filled with saints. Their schools were renowned for ages."†

The Britons, Scots, and Irish, were honoured as the instruments of spreading the Gospel in the northern parts of Europe.

Many persons travelled from Great Britain and Ireland with the laudable purpose of preaching Christ in Batavia, Belgium, and Germany.‡

Columban, an Irish monk, toward the close of the foregoing century, had extirpated the remains of expiring paganism in France. He also passed the Rhine, and evangelized the Suevi,§ the Boii,|| and other German nations. He laboured in the cause to his death, which

* Alban Butler, Vol. V. † Id. ‡ Mosheim, Cent. 7th, C. 1.

§ This people inhabited the places between the Rhine and the Elbe.

|| Now Bavarians.

happened in the year 615. Gal, one of his companions, laboured with much zeal about the lakes of Zurich and Constance. Near the latter lake, at a little distance from Bregent, he erected a monastery which still bears his name. In fortitude and laboriousness he was inferior to none of the missionaries of this age. But we find very little worthy of being recorded concerning him.

The account of Kilian, another Irish missionary, is somewhat more satisfactory. He received a commission from the bishop of Rome, toward the end of the century, to preach to the infidels; and with some of his disciples he came to Wirtzburg upon the Mayne, where a pagan duke called Gosbert was governor. The duke received the gospel, was baptized, and many followed his example. But he had married his brother's wife. The missionary united discretion with zeal, and deferred his admonitions on this head, till he found that his pupil the duke was firmly settled in the faith.* Kilian at length ventured to act the part of John the Baptist, and the event was in a great measure similar. Gosbert promised to obey, but delayed the execution of his promise till he should return from an expedition. The mischief of procrastination against the light of conscience was never more strongly illustrated. In his absence Geilana, for that was the name of the German Herodias, procured the murder of Kilian and his companions. They were engaged in devotional exercises, and died with the patience of martyrs in the year 688. Gosbert was prevailed on by the artifices of Geilana to suffer the murderers to escape with impunity. But all the actors in this tragedy, Gosbert among the rest, came to an unhappy end; and there is no doubt but that in this case, as well as many

* Fleury, B. XL. 37.

others, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Numbers of the eastern Franks had embraced Christianity, and sealed the ministry of Kilian.

Toward the conclusion of the century, Willibrod, an English missionary, and eleven of his countrymen, crossed over the sea into Holland, to labour among the Frieze-landers. But being ill treated by the king of Friezeland, who put one of their company to death,* they retired into Denmark. Returning, however, into Friezeland in the year 693, they propagated divine truth with success. Willibrod was ordained bishop of Wilteburg,† by the Roman prelate, and laboured in his diocese to his death; while his associates spread the gospel through Westphalia and the neighbouring countries.‡

Gregory of Rome died in 604. Doubtless his excellent character did much toward reconciling the Western churches to the claims of superintendence made by his see. But he never pretended to infallibility; and though in his day we perceive evident signs of the usurpation of the Papacy, the claims it has set up in later ages were wholly unknown. Indeed Gregory himself refused the title of universal bishop. The title, however, was afterwards accepted by his successor Boniface, when conferred on him by Phocas.

Phocas was a monster of iniquity, who murdered Mauriti-
us, and took possession of his throne. He was opposed to the bishop of Constantinople for being friendly to the family of his predecessor. But his own reign was a short one, for he died in 610, and was succeeded by Heraclius. In the beginning of his reign the Persians de-

* Mosheim, Cent. VII. C. 1.

† Now Utrecht.

‡ Disen, an Irish monk, taught the gospel in Ireland, France and Germany. His labours were most remarkably crowned with success in the neighbourhood of Mentz.—A. Butler.

solated the eastern part of the empire, and made themselves masters of Jerusalem.

During this period of distress, John, bishop of Alexandria, called the Almoner, daily supplied with necessities those who flocked into Egypt, after they had escaped the Persian arms. He sent to Jerusalem* the most ample relief for such as remained there: he ransomed captives; placed the sick and wounded in hospitals, and visited them, in person, two or three times a week. He even seems to have interpreted too strictly the sacred rule, "of giving to him that asketh of thee." His spirit however was noble; "Should the whole world come to Alexandria," said he, "they could not exhaust the treasures of God."

The Nile not having risen to its usual height, there was a barren season; provisions were scarce, and crowds of refugees still poured into Alexandria. John continued, however, his liberal donatives, till he had neither money, nor credit. The prayer of faith was his resource, and he still persevered in hope. He even refused a very tempting offer of a person, who would have bribed him with a large present, that he might be ordained deacon. "As to my brethren, the poor," said the holy prelate, "God, who fed them, before you and I were born, will take care to feed them now, if we obey him." Soon afterward he heard of the arrival of two large ships, which he had sent into Sicily for corn. "I thank thee, O Lord," cried the bishop in a rapture of joy, "that thou hast kept me from selling thy gift for money."

From the beginning of his bishopric, he supported 7500 poor persons by daily alms. He was accessible to them on all occasions; and what is most material, divine faith seems to have influenced his acts of love. "If God,"

* Fleury, XXXVII. 10.

said he, "allow us to enter into his house at all times, and if we wish him speedily to hear us, how ought we to conduct ourselves toward our brethren?" He constantly studied the Scriptures, and, in his conversation, was instructive and exemplary. Slander and evil speaking he peculiarly disliked. If any person in his presence was guilty in this respect, he would give another turn to the discourse. If the person still persisted, he would direct his servant not to admit him any more.

In the year 616, the haughty Chosroes, king of Persia, having conquered Alexandria and Egypt, and taken Chalcedon, Heraclius, who saw the ruin of his empire approaching, begged for peace. "That I will never consent to," replied the tyrant, "till you renounce him who was crucified, whom you call God, and with me adore the sun."

Chosroes was a second Sennacherib, and he was treated as such by the Sovereign of the universe. The spirit of Heraclius was roused, and God gave him wonderful success: the Persian king was repeatedly vanquished, though he ceased not to persecute the Christians, so long as he had power; and after he had lost the greatest part of his dominions, he was murdered by his own son, as was the case with Sennacherib, and in the year 628 the Persian power ceased to be formidable to the Roman empire.*

The Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, opposite extremes, the one dividing the person, the other confounding the two natures of Jesus Christ, though condemned by councils, still flourished in great vigour in the east. And the resistance of the orthodox had little effect, for want of the energy of true spiritual life, which still sub-

* Fleury, B. XXXVII. 34.

† Fleury, XLVII. 41.

sisted in a measure in the west. For there the sound doctrine of grace, the guard of true humility, was an ensign around which truly pious men were wont to rally their strength from time to time. But in Asia and Egypt, religion was for the most part heartless speculation. And about the year 630 the Eutychian heresy produced another, the Monothelite, which ascribed only one will to Jesus Christ.

Sophronius, of Alexandria, opposing the heresy, says: "When he thought fit, he gave his human nature an opportunity to act or to suffer whatever belonged to it. His incarnation was no fancy, and he always acted voluntarily. Jesus Christ, as God, willingly took on himself human nature, and he willingly suffered in his flesh to save us, and, by his merits, to free us from suffering. His body was subject to our natural and innocent passions: he permitted it to suffer, according to its nature, till his resurrection; then he freed himself from all that is corruptible in our nature, that he might deliver us from the same."

A new danger arose from the Saracens. Mahomet, the Arabian impostor, began in the year 608 to declare himself a prophet, and, by the assistance of a Jew and a renegado Christian, had formed a farrago of doctrines and rites, in which there was a mixture of Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, whence he found means to draw over to his party, some of the various sorts of men who inhabited Arabia. An age of excessive ignorance favoured his schemes: at this day so senseless and absurd a book as the Koran could scarce move the mind of any person in Europe. But he laid hold of the corrupt passions of man, and by indulging his followers in sensuality, ambition, and the love of booty, and by promising them a carnal heaven hereafter, he contrived a religion more

directly adapted to please mankind than any other of which we have heard. At the same time, by declaring war against all who did not receive him, he gave an undoubted right to all nations to attack a system which could only thrive by the oppression of others. But there are seasons of infatuation, when, for the sins of men, empires and kingdoms are permitted to slumber, and no effectual measures of resistance are embraced, till invaders, at first weak and contemptible, grow in time to an enormous height. This was the case with Mahometanism. The time was come when the Saracen locusts were about to torment the Christian world, and the prophecy of Rev. ix, 1—12, was going to be fulfilled. The Greeks were idly employed in the new dispute: vice and wickedness prevailed over the East in all forms. A few indeed mourned over the times, and adorned the truth by humility and holiness, but scarce any Christian writers appeared to make a serious opposition to the doctrines of Mahomet, and at the time of his death, which happened in the year 631, he had conquered almost all Arabia.

Notwithstanding the decease of the impostor, the Mahometan arms proceeded still with the same rapidity. Damascus fell into the hands of his successors; and Sophronius exhorted his flock to take warning and repent. Jerusalem however was taken by the enemy in the year 637, and Sophronius died soon after. Antioch and Alexandria successively sunk under them. Persia itself was subdued. Thus did God equally punish the persecuting idolaters, and the vicious professors of Christianity in the East. They were doomed to a long night of servitude under Mahometanism, which continues to this time. Heraclius himself died in the year 641. God had showed him great mercies, and given him very great encouragement to seek true religion, by the remarkable success of

his arms against the Persians in the middle of his reign. But he lived wickedly and speculated unscripturally. Another new power was erected, which reaped the fruits of all his Persian triumphs, and tore from him the fairest provinces of the East.

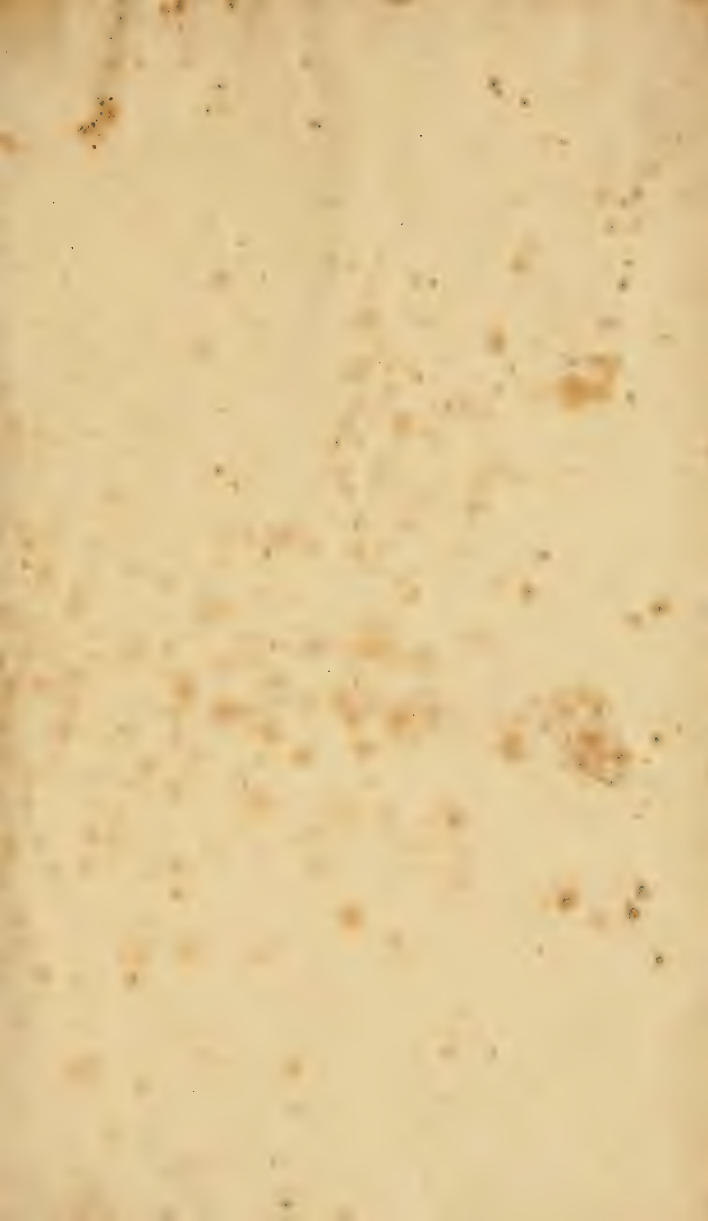
Notwithstanding the bursting of this storm, however, the Monothelite heresy continued to excite the attention of the East. It gave employ to the propensity of the human mind to speculate, and therefore was not easily subdued. How much more prone men are to follow an ignus fatuus, than to walk in the light which comes down from God! Martin, bishop of Rome, opposing the heresy, was by Constans, the successor of Heraclius, persecuted to the death.

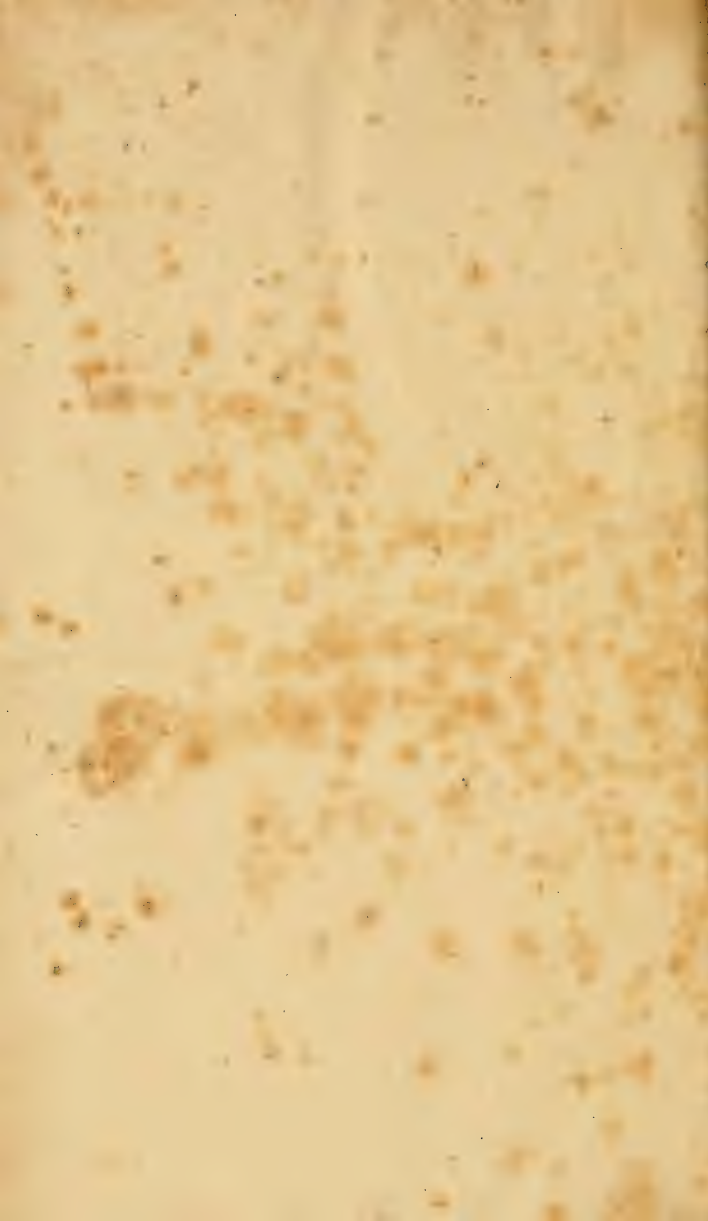
The unworthy emperor, Constans, murdered also his own brother Theodosius, and continued to disgrace the Christian name by his follies, his vices, and his cruelties. He was himself despatched at length in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, in 668.

In the year 680 a general council was called at Constantinople: the emperor Constantine Pogonatus presided: the Monothelite heresy was anathematized; and its several abettors were condemned, among whom was Honorius, a bishop of Rome. A certain proof that infallibility was neither allowed nor pretended to at that time by the Italian prelate. For the legates of Agathon, who was then bishop of Rome, were at the council, nor do we find that any opposition was made by them or by their master to the condemnation of Honorius.*

* This was the sixth general council held in the 13th year of Constantine V, surnamed Pogonatus, and the 3d year of Agathon.









BW901 .A423 v.1
History of the church of Christ.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00015 6333